

**MODERN PERFORMANCE ON VIOLA DA GAMBA**

The student string players receiving education in the Soviet Union could learn about the early music instrument viola da gamba only from “History of the Violoncello” four-volume edition of 1957 by L. Ginsburg. Several generations of cello players grew on this deep and profound book from which the important information about the formation of string instruments can be borrowed today as well. Studying the graphical drawing of the music instrument from which the cello derived and which in the author’s opinion died out as a dinosaur, I did not know that in fact the performance on viola da gamba began to revive while the author was still alive and just started its new flowering stage.

The interest in the authentic sounding of the early music appeared at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Englishman Arnold Dolmetsch (1858–1940) is traditionally considered to be the founder of this movement. He constructed the copies of old instruments and performed the seventeenth and eighteenth century music on them. At this time the Society of Old Instruments Concerts under the guidance of Camille Saint-Saëns was founded in France. In Germany in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the founder of the similar society was the cello player Christian Döbereiner who promoted the viola da gamba revival. It is the viola da gamba that can be considered a key instrument in the early music appreciation. Through the stroke technique mastering of this incredible instrument the sounding esthetics of the compositions of Renaissance and Baroque epoch can be conceived since the technical possibilities of the viola da gamba often dictated the harmonious plan of the music pieces and influenced the vocalist manner of singing.

The wave of early instruments playing which appeared at the turn of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was taken over and developed by an outstanding musician, theorist, conductor, cello and gamba player Nikolaus Harnoncourt – the cellist, who for the sake of the idea of authentic music-making retrained for the viola da gamba and then became a conductor; he was also a leading theorist and practitioner of a powerful movement of revival of the old instruments playing.

Nowadays the performance on viola da gamba in Western Europe became integrated into the structure of musical life and music vocational

education long ago as well as occupied a rightful place in the concert palette variety in the life of Europe.

There are lots of festivals of Renaissance and Baroque music where the king's place among the old instruments is occupied by this noble instrument with its sophisticated sound.

In all public higher education institutions (Hochschule) in Germany without any exception one can study viola da gamba playing. For example, the course of gamba playing belongs to the main program for cello students in Frankfurt and Cologne higher music schools. Besides, in Western Europe there are the Academies of early music where the detailed study of documents, notes, literature, dances and music together with the old instruments from different periods of Renaissance and Baroque epochs can be performed.

The most prestigious among them is Basel Academy of Music where the most outstanding gamba player of the modern age Jordi Savall used to teach and now his equally well-known apprentice Paolo Pandolfo continues to work.

The repertoire of a gamba player is extremely rich. I will give just a few names of the composers who composed for gamba in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries:

John Jenkins, Christopher Simpson (the author of the guide to gamba playing which remains one of the best manuals today), Henry Purcell, John Playford (England), Lois Couperin, Marc-Antoine Charpentier, Sainte-Colombe, Marin Marais (France), Joanne Philip Krieger, Philip Erlebach, Dietrich Buxtehude (Germany and the Netherlands), Diego Ortiz (Spain). Johann Sebastian Bach wrote 3 sonnets for viola da gamba accompanied by a harpsichord which were later transcribed for alt and violoncello. It is amazing that now they can be heard and performed on the original instrument!

In 1991 the musical world received a great present. A French film director Alain Corneau produced a feature film "All the Mornings of the World" (Tout les matins du monde) about the composer and gamba player Marin Marais. A famous French actor Gérard Depardieu starred the film. This is one of the most true to life movies about the musician's life in the world history of cinema. No wonder that it received the highest award of the international film festival Cezar in seven nominations. One of them was awarded for the best music and it was received by a brilliant gamba player and conductor Jordi Savall. The music of Marin Marais, Sainte-Colombe and Jean Baptiste Lully in his performance amazed the world. The popularity of viola da gamba reached its peak thanks to Jordi Savall, in particular. For example, in 2007 the number of the sold discs

with the records of this extraordinary musician and his Hespèrion XXI ensemble reached 1.8 million. Such rating can be compared only to pop-stars success. Apart from Jordi Savall there are other famous gamba players in Western Europe, such as Paolo Pandolfo, August Wenzinger, Josef Ulsamer, Susanne Heinrich and many others.

Apart from numerous works for gamba solo and accompanied by cembalo or lute, viola da gamba is a welcome guest in each ensemble which performs early music. The gamba is perfectly combined in the ensembles not only with string instruments such as viola da braccio and viola d'amore, Baroque violin but also with wooden wind instruments as well, such as flute traverso, oboe d'amore, clarinet d'amore and with the Irish Baroque harp or theorbo. The theorbo is close to gamba that is why the parts of these two instruments often duplicate each other completing timbrally creating unique colored sound in consorts. In addition to the orchestra consorts there are gamba consorts. These are orchestras consisting only of gambas of different size and range. In the late 16<sup>th</sup> and in the early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries the gamba consorts were so popular in England that the masters made them in sets of seven different in size. The smallest in the consort, a descant gamba served in due time as a model for the Baroque violin. Fretwork, Ulsamer-Collegium, Phantasm, Hamburger Ratsmusik and Baltimore Consort are the famous gamba consorts at present.

The variety of good music today astonishes and what is more, the whole cultural layer passed unnoticed by the professional musicians who were formed in the background of the Soviet Union and cultural isolation and paranoid censorship which were typical of it. The Ukrainian musicians did not have access to music tractates and notes found and decoded in the 1950-80s, to sensations and discoveries available at that time in the musical world of Western Europe. The consequences of these cultural gaps have their effects up till now in spite of the fact that the borders are open. This can be keenly felt by the musicians who went or perform abroad as well as by the young performers participating in the international contests when it refers to the performance style niceties of the works of Bach, Vivaldi or other early composers. In higher education institutions of Western Europe the students have the possibility to perform the Baroque music on the instruments of that time and it gives a great advantage in the comprehension of the style peculiarities such as phonation, embellishment, etc.

In recent years the art of viola da gamba playing has conquered new territories and moves steadily to the East. In Poland the viola da gamba class has been recently opened in Music Academies in Wroclaw and Krakow. In Moscow as of the year 2010 there were seven ensembles of

early music which comprised viola da gamba. According to a famous Moscow contrabass and gamba player Myroslav Maksymyuk (who was born and received elementary education in Lviv) this instrument acquired popularity and found its niche in the cultural centers of the Russian Federation.

It is obvious that these new and at the same time old trends do not come unnoticed in Western Ukraine. Here just as one hundred years ago in Europe everything started with the enthusiasm of separate musicians. One of them is the founder and creative director of the Festival of Early Music in Lviv, a famous Lviv musicologist, arranger, pedagogue and singer Roman Stelmaschuk. This year he will manage already the 11<sup>th</sup> festival running, which represents the early music of different European countries to the full extent and at the professional level. During the last years thanks to him and his musical contacts the festival was attended by the performers from Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, Great Britain, Netherlands, Chili, USA, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Russia, Belorussia and Ukraine. And, of course, it was at the festival in Lviv that a viola da gamba was heard for the first time. It took place in 2005 within the program of the Third Festival of Early Music in Lviv. Two ensembles, Hortus Artium (Krakow, Poland) and Consortium Sedinum (Stettin, Poland), which comprised a viola da gamba visited that festival. At that time this event did not enjoy a wide response among the professional musicians, which does not surprise me since at first it is necessary to raise a listener and connoisseur of authenticity, develop a taste for sophisticated esthetics of gut strings as well as for the comprehension of the specific music constructions and only then one can expect an adequate attitude to ancient rarities. The arrival of the early music ensemble with three violas da gamba from Hamburg gathered scarcely 50 attenders in 2008. I was luckier. My performance with viola da gamba in the Sixth Festival of Early Music in Lviv aroused much interest among Lviv audience and not only in Lviv alone. The day before the Festival the group of musicians from Kyiv arrived specially to see the first Ukrainian gamba player as well as the viola da gamba, a work of Uzhhorod master Stepan Tykhonenko.

It may be said without exaggeration that thanks to this person the development of the authentic instruments playing became possible in Ukraine. A doctor and philosopher by education and a musician – lute player by avocation, Stepan Tykhonenko with a lute in his hands toured the whole Europe at a young age. He learnt at the master classes of famous musicians of Germany, Switzerland and Great Britain. He was

probably the first to realize that without real authentic instruments it will be impossible to develop and raise the music of the Medieval and Renaissance ages to an adequate level in Ukraine. In Uzhhorod in 1996 Stepan founded his own workshop and started to make old instruments according to the ancient samples which with the appearance of the orchestras in the 18<sup>th</sup> century began to die out and then were out of use. The Gothic harp, diddle, viola da gamba, lute, mandolin and Ukrainian music instrument turban well-known in the Hetman epoch belong here. Today the musicians from Austria, Sweden, Germany, USA, Russia and Ukraine play the instruments of Stepan Tykhonenko. Having found out that I started to study gamba playing, the master gave me a present. He made the instrument, a viola da gamba, especially for me. It was this instrument that I performed with in Lviv organ hall in the Sixth Festival of Early Music together with the singer from Sweden Tetyana Polt-Lutsenko. The disc of concert was recorded, which is now available in Ukraine. And in 2011 together with this wonderful instrument I entered the Dr. Hoch's Conservatory in Frankfurt am Main to study under the supervision of leading gamba player of Frankfurt Rosvita Brukheier. She highly appreciated the instrument made by the Ukrainian master.

An Austrian gamba player Peter Benovych who plays the viola da gamba made by Stepan Tykhonenko will visit Lviv for the second time with a concert and master classes. It is noteworthy to mention that this year Lviv Festival of Early Music takes up an educational and enlightenment function. Within the frame of the Festival there will be master classes of oratorical music and recorder/pipe players and the master class of the viola da gamba playing will be the main event.

**Keywords:** *viola da gamba, old instruments, renaissance, baroque, authentic performance, early music, consort.*

#### Література

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