

Dear friend of the arts,

Whosoever you are, stay for a while at this entrance of my garden and, if you like, hear what you have to be told about the reason of my enterprise. Initially, you must know that you shouldn't expect a tutor with rules how to study the lute or how to transpose vocal music unto the lute. If you are looking for something like that you'd better turn to Emmanuel Adriansen's "Pratum Musicum" (Antwerps, 1592) or Antoine Francisque's work (Paris 1600) in its popular french version, the doctrine of which G. L. Fuhrmann added in German to his "Testudo Gallo-Germanica" (Nuremberg 1615), or to J. B. Besard's printed edition "Thesaurus Harmonicus" (Cologne 1603) for I didn't intend to do again what's already done.

Furthermore, you should be clear about the fact that I deviated from the common use of the authors to be seen here in not taking only very few pieces of singular kinds into my work, as others do, but the way learners are usually presented almost only preludes, fantasies and fugues in the beginning, I shall in the present first part of this work give you nothing but merely preludes, fantasies and fugues, and this not tight-fistedly but from a full hand, as the saying has it. I offer you as many as I could find in my books and have judged worth it but in such a way that you must yourself make your easy or rather difficult choice from such a multitude and variety. For the second part, if the first will have pleased, I have saved the most selected pieces which amuse by their sweetness and their novelty alike as there are (the following un-Latin names be allowed:) courants, volts, branles, ballets, galliards, passemezzi and the like that I possess in a great number.

Since among all authors of the art of the lute that I could obtain (I have acquired about 18 old and modern editions) none satisfied me more than that of Antione Francisque, I have taken care that mine looks like his in terms of bar measuring and letters on the lines. For although our Germans are not used to the so called french tablature, exercise and practice will easily overcome what is difficult, particularly because here the letters have been put above the line whereas otherwise they are usually put on the line.

But indeed I feel like hearing the voices of those who will gossip, partly that nothing here comes from me, partly that these pieces should never have been spread and so been profaned but should have been kept safe since, as the saying has it, even the Eleusine mysteries save (for the insiders) what they show, and commonly accessible things lose in value. To the latter (I take it hysterion proteron) I object what Zenodotus cites in his Adagia ("Sayings"): The doors of the Muses are open, and nothing seems so worth noble man as to consider such gifts of the Muses serenely and without envy. Now, if someone thinks he must be afraid of some contempt contained in this saying, he ought to know that here applies what (as Gellius tells somewhere) Aristotle answered to Alexander when the sovereign was not amused for the same reason about Aristotle publishing his Physics. Aristotle answered that it was published and was not published as it was only comprehensible to those in the know, i.e. quite a few, because the path to the most beautiful art leads via difficulty which keeps the entrance locked for most people. To those who think I didn't add of my own work I don't even contradict very much but, meanwhile, I feel like challenging them to prove equal industry in acquiring and judgment in selecting and labor in disposing and a serene and benevolent heart in uniting the most prominent artists into this medicine cabinet. Unless the waxen presents of the bees are less welcome or less suitable for human use because they take what they can use for their task sitting on foreign flowers and, with labor similar to but un-imitable by humans,

Stuff the liquid honey and fill
the chambers with sweet nectar...

Nevertheless I didn't want to give the names of the authors with each single piece nor to let a list precede the work (which both has been done with the works of Besard and Fuhrmann, as I've noticed). On the one hand, I didn't want to preoccupy your opinion by prejudice if it be so, as there is often wisdom to be found even under a dirty philosopher's cloak, that it has oftentimes happened that from less artfully obscure or bright works came something famous and prominent. On the other hand, I didn't want pieces to be ascribed to authors who are not the creators. For it is not in each case certain to me by whom a piece was written. But as experts will without difficulty know the style of educated people, it will be done here as said.

Misprints that at least couldn't escape the trooping eyes on the course, I did delete myself by hand. If despite of that some have remained, please don't ascribe it to my lack of experience or my negligence but to my business and judge my work good and, as for the little sum, spend it willingly to acquire this work. For this I dare assure you: If you travel through Italy or roam through France or creep on every corner of England and Germany you will hardly or not even hardly find such a lot of selected music as I present it here. What is more, for a single little piece of masterly art so difficult to get you will have to pay the same amount or more money than this whole volume of so many selected preludes, fantasies and fugues which I have collected and make public and accessible, will have cost you. You have got it. Now, you may if you like run through the bliss of my little garden.

Elias Mertel

Hortus Musicalis Novus 1615

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