



ATTENTION CELLISTS! - NO MORE SAMMARTINI SONATA

By Catherine Milligan

Cellists trying to purchase the *G major Sonata* by G. Sammartini will have difficulty, as the work has for some years been attributed to Martin Berteau and music publishers now issue the work under the name of the correct composer. Unfortunately, the AMEB has not caught up with the news and it is still listed incorrectly as Sammartini, in the current Grade 7 Cello Syllabus.

Why was the sonata thought to be by Sammartini? How was the real composer identified, and who is Berteau?

The copy that we have been playing from for so many years is a 1911 edition by Alfred Moffat, who revived and re-worked many old works. Moffat made his edition from a set of sonatas published in Paris in 1748 under composer "Sigr. Martino". The identity of the composer with this pen name was open to conjecture, and Sammartini seemed a likely candidate, as he often used the shortened name "Martini". Other surviving copies of this 1748 French edition are in libraries in Bologna and London, and were incorrectly attributed to Philippo Martino and Francois Martin.

Jane Adas, Professor of Music at Rutgers University, New Jersey, finally solved the puzzle. She discovered a set of sonatas acquired by the British Library in 1975. Op.1 by Martin Berteau, published in 1772,

is identical to the 1748 "Sigr. Martino set", except that fingerings had been added and figures from the bass removed. It is possible that the 1748 edition may have been a reissue with the addition of fingering by a former Berteau student. Why it was published under the name "Sigr. Martino", is not known but it may simply have been that compositions by Italian composers were more "in vogue" and sold more readily at that time in France.

The original copy of the sonata is a typical example of an 18th century continuo sonata, with four movements, and the solo part with a bass line and some figures as accompaniment. A second cellist could easily have accompanied the sonata, and indeed this accompanying bass line is useful in a pedagogic setting today. The fundamental difference between the original and the modern publication is the additional movement and the keyboard accompaniment. Moffat added a piano accompaniment, often with changes to the rhythm, voicing and the addition of chromatic changes to the harmony of the bass line to suit the romantic fashion of the early 20th century. The original version also has a few different notes in the first movements, including double stops in the 2nd movement. It also lacks all the dynamics and tempo indications of the 20th century version.

The discovery of Berteau as the true composer of the *G major Sonata* is important because Berteau is a significant figure in the history of the cello. Martin Berteau (1707 – 1771) from Valenciennes, was the undisputed founder of the French school of cello playing. His pupils, Jean Pierre Duport, Jean Baptiste Cupis, Tilliere and Jean Baptiste Aimee Joseph Janson, were some of the most famous cellists of the late 18th century. They all inherited his powerful but sweet tone, and imparted this quality in turn to their pupils.

Berteau began his career as a gambist, but after hearing the legendary Italian cellist 'Franciscello' (1691-1739), he was immediately attracted to the cello and devoted himself to the instrument. He was an enormous success in the Paris salons as much for his charm and wit as for the beauty of tone and depth of expression in



MARTIN BERTEAU

his playing. Although Berteau continued to use the underhand bow hold from his gamba playing he advanced the technique of the left hand. He developed and made extensive use of harmonics, and employed a more modern fingering system, which included the use of thumb position, extensions between 1st and 2nd fingers, and a more perpendicular left-hand position. Those familiar with the *G major Sonata* will know how idiomatic to the cello it is, which points to the composer's understanding of cello technique. Before the discovery by Jane Adas, the only Berteau music we knew was the *Etude in G* from the Duport *21 Studies*, and one in A minor in the Brevall *Traite du Violoncello*, along with some short pieces in a collection by another student, Cupis.

The original version of this sonata is available, reproduced in facsimile in *THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CONTINUO SONATA* (Vol.7), 1991; edited by Jane Adas, with an introduction by Jaap Schroder, from GARLAND PUBLISHING: 136 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016. There is a copy in the Melbourne University Library.

ENDNOTES:

Adas, J.: "Le célèbre Berteau", *Early Music*.1989; XVII: 368-382

Campbell, M.: *The Great Cellists*, Victor Gollancz, London, 1988

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