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Introduction

The fourteen sonatas of this edition constitute the corpus of instrumental music of Petrus Hercules Brehy (1673–1737) conserved at the Library of the Royal Conservatories of Music, Brussels (B-Bc). They are the only instrumental works Brehy is known to have composed during his tenure at the Collegiate Church of SS. Michael and Gudula.¹ Watermarks, ink, style, and performing circumstances indicate that the twelve sonatas for four instruments and continuo date from between ca. 1715 and ca. 1722 (see “Sources” in the critical report). Brehy assigned the sonatas sequential Latin titles (“sonata prima,” “sonata secunda,” “sonata tertia,” etc.), owing to their intended use in religious ceremonies. The two *sonates à 5* date from a few years later and may have served a different purpose, but they, too, were prepared as a set.

Petrus Hercules Brehy was a native son of Brussels who for more than thirty years served as choirmaster (*zangmeester*) and music teacher at St. Gudula. Brehy’s sonatas are part of the Fonds Sainte-Gudule, an impressive music repertory that once belonged to the Collegiate Church.² The Fonds Sainte-Gudule comprises more than 480 eighteenth-century manuscripts and some later prints (see “Sources” in the critical report for a detailed historiography).

The Fonds Sainte-Gudule contains all the extant music Brehy wrote while at St. Gudula, much of the sacred music of his successor Joseph Hector Fiocco, as well as most of the oeuvre of Fiocco’s successor Charles Joseph van Helmont, who had been a choirboy under Brehy; it also contains music by Fiocco’s father, Pietro Antonio, and brother, Jean Joseph. Many of Brehy’s contemporaries in Brussels and abroad are also represented. To the great surprise of those who study this repertory, a chest with more than one hundred additional eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music manuscripts and prints was discovered during the excavation of St. Gudula in 1984, and in 1986 its contents were acquired by KBR, the Royal

1. Since 1962, this formidable religious establishment has been the co-Cathedral of the Archdiocese of Mechelen-Brussels. Known to the French-speaking community as Cathédrale des Saints Michel et Gudule and the Flemish-speaking community as Kathedraal van Sint-Michiël en Sint-Goedele, it will be referred to in this edition, using the English translation of the nomenclature of Brehy’s time, as “the Collegiate Church,” “SS. Michael and Gudula,” or “St. Gudula.”

2. The seventy-two individual parts that constitute Brehy’s instrumental works are cataloged under a single shelfmark.

Library of Belgium (B-Br). Among these manuscripts were several motets by Brehy.

The twelve sonatas for four instruments and continuo are perhaps the earliest surviving complete examples of instrumental ensemble music from eighteenth-century Brussels. A notable exception is Brehy’s own *Symphoniae duodecim consecratae* (Antwerp: Henricus Aertssens, 1700) for two violins and continuo. The young Brehy dedicated this publication to Ferdinand Gaston Lamoral de Croÿ (?1641–1720), Count of Roeulx and Knight of the Golden Fleece, perhaps with the hope of obtaining patronage to study in Italy (whether or not he succeeded remains unknown). Only the violin parts survive; they were recently donated to the University of Leuven as part of the Di Martinelli music collection. While the musical style of the symphonias suggests the influence of earlier Brussels-based composers Nicolaes a Kempis and Philippus van Wichel, the B-Bc sonatas are the work of a seasoned craftsman comfortable with a variety of compositional idioms.

This edition is intended to introduce scholars and performers to Brehy’s instrumental music, to open a window of insight into the stylistic crosscurrents in early eighteenth-century Brussels, and to add to the body of late-Baroque chamber repertory.

The Composer

A brief entry in the St. Gudula *Acta capitularia* (chapter act books) of 16 November 1705 marks the beginning of a new musical legacy that would endure until the turmoil of the Brabant Revolution of 1789–90:

The Very Reverend Canons, in agreement of the Chapter, convened a special meeting this past Friday and together elected as choirmaster Hercules Petrus Brehy to replace Mr. [Estienne Dominicq] De Namur under the conditions prescribed herein.³

The actual name of this new choirmaster has caused controversy within the context of the Belgian language divide, then and now. The announcement of his appointment in the chapter act book cites him as “Hercules Petrus Brehÿ.” Both this form and “Petrus Hercules Brehÿ” are found in numerous archival sources including many

3. ASG 926, fol. 455v. The archives of St. Gudula are thoroughly detailed in Paul De Ridder, *Inventaris van het oud archief van de Kapittelkerk van Sint-Michiël en Sint-Goedele te Brussel*, 3 vols. (Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 1987–88).

Sonata No. 1 in G Minor

Allegro

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Basso Viola

Basso continuo

3

Vn. 1

Vn. 2

Va.

B.Va.

B.c.

5

Vn. 1

Vn. 2

Va.

B.Va.

B.c.

6 6 #6

25

Musical score for measures 25-30. The score is for five instruments: Vn. 1, Vn. 2, Va., B.Va., and B.c. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor). The time signature is 3/4. The music features intricate rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and rests. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 5, 6, and #6.

28

Musical score for measures 28-30. The score is for five instruments: Vn. 1, Vn. 2, Va., B.Va., and B.c. The key signature is one flat. The music features sixteenth-note passages in the strings and sustained notes in the lower instruments. A fermata is present over the final measure of the section.

31

Largo

Musical score for measures 31-35. The score is for five instruments: Vn. 1, Vn. 2, Va., B.Va., and B.c. The key signature is one flat. The tempo is marked **Largo**. The music is characterized by slow, sustained notes and rests. Fingerings are indicated by numbers #, #6, 6, [6], #, b6, and 6.

Sonate à 5 in G Minor

Allegro

Oboe

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Basso Viola

Basso continuo

6

Ob.

Vn. 1

Vn. 2

Va.

B.Va.

B.c.

5 b6 7 6 7 6 # 5

b #6 6 b # 5 b6 7 6 7 6

Detailed description: This page contains the first system of a musical score for 'Sonate à 5 in G Minor', measures 1 through 11. The score is for a five-part ensemble: Oboe, Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Basso continuo. The tempo is marked 'Allegro'. The key signature is G minor (one flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The Oboe part is mostly silent in the first system, with a melodic line starting in measure 10. Violin 1 plays a rhythmic eighth-note pattern. Violin 2 has a more melodic line with some rests. The Viola and Basso Viola parts provide harmonic support with sustained notes and rhythmic patterns. The Basso continuo part includes figured bass notation: 5 b6 7 6 7 6 # 5. The second system (measures 6-11) shows the Oboe and Violin 1 parts more prominently. The Basso continuo part has further figured bass: b #6 6 b # 5 b6 7 6 7 6.

Critical Report

Sources

The manuscript sources of Brehy's instrumental works in the Library of the Royal Conservatories, Brussels, cataloged as shelfmark Litt. V 33.741 (*olim* FG 67), consists of seventy-two individual parts. Each sonata was prepared as a separate entity comprising a complete set of parts. Sixty-nine individual parts are in Brehy's hand. The copyist of the three remaining parts (all from the *sonate à 5* in G major) clearly prepared them with Brehy.

Codicological analysis reveals that the parts of the twelve sonatas for four instruments and continuo were copied as a specific project within a short time frame; the same is true for the two *sonates à 5* some years later. The manuscript parts have survived thanks to the Collegiate Church's mid-eighteenth-century conservation effort. The parts are all in good condition, with a few eighteenth-century corrections and repairs. Faint pencil markings suggest at least some of the sonatas were removed from the library during the twentieth century and used in performance.¹ The parts of sonata no. 1 show the most wear, and the entire sixth staff line of the basso viola part (m. 25 to m. 27, note 8) is a paste-over emendation in the hand of one of Brehy's choirboys. Brehy himself made corrections to sonata no. 3, where in measure 91 he changed the marking "Allegro" in all the parts to "Presto," and sonata no. 8, where he corrected the marking "Allegro" in the viola in measure 82 to "Largo." There are also several clef corrections (see plates 4, 8, and 9).

The manuscripts' survival reflects the unique history of the Collegiate Church's music collection. The origin of the Fonds Sainte-Gudule, the collection containing these manuscripts, begins with the death in August 1736 of Jacobus Albertus Khnopff, the cantor to whom Brehy had reported since July 1707. Cantor Khnopff does not appear to have been actively involved as a musician, nor is his relationship with Brehy or his influence on St. Gudula's musical activities recorded in the *Acta capitularia*. This was to change with Khnopff's successor Joannes Bernardus Vanden Boom (1688–1769). However, by the time of Vanden Boom's promotion from canon to cantor, Brehy was ailing.

1. Faint crosses in pencil appear once in each of the parts of sonatas nos. 2, 3, 9, and 10, but these are twentieth-century rehearsal marks; the basso viola part of sonata no. 3 has a small musical variant in pencil around measure 73, which is also a modern addition and is not considered in this edition.

Vanden Boom had substantial wealth and would become one of the Collegiate Church's great benefactors, with gifts of more than 31,900 florins.² Vanden Boom funded the purchase of a new organ and carillon, as well as seven violins, two violas, four cellos, two double basses, two *walthorns* in F, two serpents, and two transverse flutes and oboes made by Rottenburgh; he also funded the hiring of an oboist. He paid for a new marble floor for the choir loft and endowed several chaplaincies. But it was his gift of 10,000 florins for the purchase, repair, and copying of manuscripts that became the foundation of the Fonds Sainte-Gudule.

Vanden Boom sought to rebuild St. Gudula's once impressive music library, which formerly included works of Palestrina, de Monte, Lassus, Stadlmayr, Crequillion, Clemens, Victoria, Tichon, Zamponi, and Gasparo and Maurizio Cazzati, but had been depleted considerably by the time of his appointment. The reason for the loss is unknown, as no natural or man-made disaster befell the Collegiate Church. Perhaps De Namur, Brehy, or the canons needed space and sold music they considered old-fashioned, or perhaps the music was lent to the Chapel Royal and lost in the fire of 1731. Vanden Boom's substantial financial support provided the means to restore the music library, and he charged Brehy to organize his own manuscripts and repair damaged parts or hire copyists to create replacements. Vanden Boom then began to purchase music directly from composers and their heirs, from other Brussels churches, and from his contacts in Italy, which he had visited in 1725. Interestingly, a copy of Brehy's *Symphoniae duodecim consecratae* was not acquired; perhaps Vanden Boom only wanted manuscripts, or perhaps Brehy himself no longer possessed a copy.

Vanden Boom went a step further than merely funding the project. He designed protective cardboard covers for the growing collection, adorned with an engraved floriated oval border, and across the top, from left to right, are a stylized oboe, a violin, a cello, and a *walthorn*, through which two transverse flutes cross one another, as well as a small harp, another violin, and another stylized

2. The life and contributions of the celebrated cantor are discussed in Paul De Ridder, "Jan Bernard Vanden Boom (1688–1769), maecenas van de kapittelkerk van Sint-Michiël en Sint-Goedele te Brussel," *Handelingen der Koninklijke Zuidnederlandse maatschappij voor taal- en letterkunde en geschiedenis* 37 (1983): 67–85.