

When I first started playing viols in 1964, I was struck by the scarcity of music parts to play from. About the only source was in the SP publications of the VdGS-UK. Music was available in Musica Britannica, but it was all in scores and each player needed the whole volume a rather expensive proposition. I soon made arrangements with Gordon Dodd, the editor of the SP series, that, instead of sending me the usual copies, he would send Ozalid masters so that I could reproduce copies and provide them at cost in the US. It was just on a private, non-commercial level.

I soon discovered sources for microfilm copies of some 16th and 17th century manuscripts and acquired a number of them. I obtained a microfilm projector and at first, transcribed parts from the microfilms onto Ozalid masters. Then when photocopy machines became available, I was able to make just ordinary copies to reproduce parts from.

In the mid 1970's I acquired a computer; one I had to solder together myself. Since there were no music editing programs available then, I coded my own. It was in the Forth language and very simplistic; it did only the essential functions that I needed to make viol parts. I could make only single voice parts, but I used my own version of entering notes and other symbols and of spacing the notes on the page. I gradually added features such as "one-click" transposing, making scores and MIDI files and clef changing to any clef. And I am still using this program today. The entry method allows me to enter the notes rapidly so that the main speed limitations are in deciphering the manuscripts I am reading from.

Later when computer CD-ROMs became available I passed my copies around on them, and now have welcomed the opportunity to make the material more widely available on the internet for all to enjoy.

In addition to providing parts and scores in printable .pdf format, I have also used the Personal Computer program for presentation of the scores and have included a .pc version for each score. This has an additional advantage in that the program easily allows much more complete control of the playback by computer or MIDI instrument than any other program I know. It allows changing tempo, and instrumentation, volume, and even clef, selectively for each voice. It is all too seldom that players can regularly assemble enough viol players to play five and six part pieces. By playing these on the computer and reading the scores on the computer screen, or perhaps a TV set, while they are being played, small groups can comfortably play these pieces, with the computer filling in the missing parts. Or, as was not unusual in the 17th century, the organ can also be used to support the voices of those playing. This is perfectly possible using the demo version of the Personal Computer program which is freely downloadable from the web site www.pcomposer.com. Selecting an appropriate tempo allows a "Music Minus One" type of playing at any skill level.

I have continued transcribing parts from the microfilms and other sources sporadically for the past forty years and as you see, have accumulated quite a collection. My goal was to make parts available in modern notation for viol players to play from and not necessarily to make scholarly researched versions. If a version was adequate for 17th century players to use, it was good enough for me in the 21st century. I have also continued many of the spelling variations abundant at that time in the composers names. That seems to add a 17th century "aura" to the pieces.

On a personal note: I retired as a Commander after 24 years in the US Navy, having served principally in electronics, radar, and ship operations. I then obtained a Bachelor of Music degree in Music History and Literature with organ as my principal instrument. Subsequently I worked as a computer programmer for 16 years, and I now live in a retirement community just outside of Washington, DC., spending much of my time teaching seniors to use computers. I play treble, tenor, or bass viol, and flute with several local groups in the area for enjoyment, not for performance.

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