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*By Owain Edwards*

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# William Corbett's instrumental music

by *Owain Edwards*

The English violinist William Corbett (c. 1675–1748) was a celebrated performer in the early eighteenth century. This was no mean achievement in an age when, as John Playford put it in the Preface to the Third Book of his *Choice Ayres and Songs*,<sup>1</sup>

it is so much the Vanity of some of our English Gentry to admire that in a Foreigner, which they either slight, or take little notice of, in one of their own Nation.

His prowess as a violinist is acknowledged by both Hawkins<sup>2</sup> and Burney,<sup>3</sup> but he succeeded in eliciting from them but faint response to his capabilities as a composer. It is informative, therefore, to recall the comment in *Archaeologica Scotica*,<sup>4</sup> that Corbett was

reckoned a great master and composer. Corbett's sonatas for two violins and a bass were esteemed good, and often played as act tunes in the Play-house.

Hawkins and Burney were writing their histories of music well over half a century after Corbett had first given the public the pleasure of hearing most of his compositions, and were concerned more with describing the amount and kind of music published, than with relating about the reception it had received in its own time. They were writing after a dramatic change had taken place in English music, a change of taste nothing short of revolutionary, as one late eighteenth-century commentator observed.<sup>5</sup> In view of this, it is not surprising that Corbett's music was considered definitively music of the past by Hawkins and Burney, and consequently useless. Nevertheless, it might not be irrelevant, considering the increasing interest in early music, to take a fresh look at Corbett's compositions, not least with a view to possible performance.

In the following essay aspects of Corbett's music will be discussed, and some musical quotations made in order to give a fair impression of his style. The course of his career, the question whether he was a spy as was rumoured, and the matter concerning the refusal by Gresham College, London, of his bequest of priceless violins, are discussed elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> An explanation will be offered here for the

<sup>1</sup> London, 1681.

<sup>2</sup> John Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music* (London, 1776; reference will be made to the edition by Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1963), 822–23.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Burney, *A General History of Music* (London, 1789; reference to the edition by Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1957), ii, 694, 985, 990, 995, 997–98.

<sup>4</sup> Edinburgh, 1792, 510.

<sup>5</sup> John Marsh, *A Comparison between the Ancient & Modern Styles of Music* (London, 1796) reprinted with introduction by C.L. Cudworth in *Music & Letters*, vol. 36; no.2, April, 1955.

<sup>6</sup> Owain Edwards, "Espionage, a collection of violins, and *Le Bizzarie Universali*: A fresh look at William Corbett", *The Musical Quarterly*, (in press).

intriguing question of how it came about that a member of the English royal orchestra should choose to publish a composition purporting to represent early eighteenth-century Swedish taste, in his concerto "alla Suedese".

His instrumental publications amount to the following:

- op.1 12 sonatas a 3, 2 vn, vc, bc (org) (Amsterdam, c. 1700)
- op.2 6 sonatas, 2 fl, bc (London, 1705); reprinted in 8 sonatas, 6 de Mr Corbett (Amsterdam, c. 1706)
- op.3 6 sonatas, with an overture and aires in 4 parts, tpt, 2 vn, 2 ob, fl, bn/hpd (London, c. 1708); also published as 6 sonatas, tpt/ob, 2 vn, bc, avec une ouverture & suite, 2 tpt/ob, 2 vn, va, bc, edn corrigee (Amsterdam, c. 1708); overture and aires published as *A New Set of Tunes* (London, c. 1708)
- op.4 6 sonatas a 3, 2 rec/fl, bc, libro primo (London, c. 1713); 6 sonatas a 3, 2 vn, bc (spinet/hpd) libro secondo (London, c. 1713)
- op.8 *Le bizzarie universali*, a 4, 2 vn, va, bc (hpd) (London, 1728); also published as part of *Concerto's or universal bizzaries*, 4 vn, va, vc, bc, hpd, in 7 parts, also for 2 vn/fl/ob in 3 parts (London, 1742), (various titles)

This makes a total of thirty-five surviving concertos, thirty-six sonatas and a separate suite consisting of an overture and aires. The concertos or *Universal Bizzaries*, op.8 were preceded by the publication of a cantata, op.7, entitled *Lost is my Love*. The remaining vocal music consists of separate songs, none of which is given an opus number. Two publications are thus unaccounted for between the op.4 sonatas and the cantata op.7. One of these may have been a set of concertos. Hawkins asserts that Corbett had two different concerto publications.<sup>7</sup>

before he left England, he had published two or three sets of Sonatas for violins and flutes, twelve Concertos for all instruments, and sundry sets of tunes made for plays; but upon his return, about the year 1740, he brought over with him a great quantity of music of his composing during his residence abroad, from the publication of which here he hoped to derive considerable advantage: accordingly he published proposals for printing by subscription his Opera VIII. a work which he entitled 'Concertos or Universal Bizzaries, composed on all the new Gustos during many years residence in Italy' in three books, containing thirty-five Concertos in seven parts...

Corbett's life spanned the closing years of an era in English musical life, before music in the 'ancient style' passed out of fashion in favour of the elegant and gently dramatic *galant* music of John Christian Bach and his imitators.<sup>8</sup> Only well-established favourites in the concert repertoire of Baroque music were to hold a place, temporarily, in the public's affections later in the eighteenth century. And the best-loved of these, even the concertos of Corelli, Handel, Geminiani and Vivaldi, whose popularity would earlier have seemed immutable, gradually had to yield to what one composer of the Old Guard, Charles Avison,<sup>9</sup> wrote

<sup>7</sup> Hawkins, 823. This is borne out by Ernst Ludwig Gerber, who in his *Neues historisch-biographisches Lexikon der Tonkünstler* (Leipzig, 1812; ed. O. Wessely, Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, Graz, 1966, column 780), enumerates Corbett's publications. The fact that he gives details of the instruments for which the sonatas were intended, indicates that he must have looked at the titlepages of the earlier works at least. That he had seen copies of the concertos can not be relied upon with any certainty, for he uses the same formulations as Hawkins, even to repeating the letter 'r' in *Bizzaries* as found in the passage quoted from Hawkins, but which spelling is not found in any of the titlepages of the concertos. After giving details of the sonatas, Gerber attributes Corbett with: 5) XII Concertos for all Instruments. London 6) XXXV Concertos or Universal Bizzaries, a 7 part. in 3 Books. Op.8. London 1741.

<sup>8</sup> Some contemporary English views of the change are presented in the present author's "Revolution in 18th-century music", *History Today*, vol. 18, no.11, November, 1968.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Avison, *Six Sonatas for the Harpsichord with Accompaniments for two Violins and a Violoncello*, op.8 (London, 1764). From the introductory 'Advertisement'.

off in 1764 as, "this Torrent of confused Sounds, which is still encreasing". Concerti grossi were replaced in concert programmes by "the innumerable foreign Overtures, now pouring in upon us every Season, which are all involved in the same Confusion of Stile, instead of displaying the fine Varieties of Air and Design".

Along with the bulk of English Baroque music, Corbett's compositions passed quickly into oblivion. It is regrettable that they have remained in this state for an appraisal reveals them to include a number of most ingratiating movements.

Scholars familiar with the music of J.H. Roman will find a strong affinity between his music and Corbett's. This is only to be expected: both composers were enthusiastic adherents of the Italian instrumental style, and both were nurtured to it in London. Corbett was Roman's senior by almost twenty years – his date of birth has yet to be discovered – and had already reached the height of his profession when Roman arrived in London to begin "perfecting" his knowledge of music. Whether they met or not is unknown. Corbett left England in September 1716, not to return until 1723, by which time Roman had returned home. Roman inevitably received the full impact of English taste for Italian music, in particular for the violin, and increasingly for wind soloists. The musical profession in the capital city was in the hands of relatively few people, and it is unthinkable for Roman not to have become familiar with Corbett by repute, as well as with his sonatas and songs which were in current use, during the five years he lived in London. The fact that Corbett and Roman have stylistic characteristics in common stems naturally from the musical environment in which both developed their talents.

### Observations on the sonatas

It was the trio sonata not the solo sonata which Corbett took for his model, notwithstanding his own abilities as a performer. He published no solo sonatas or solo concertos. This is not to say, however, that there are no technically rewarding passages in either the sonatas or the concertos! The model imitated in his *XII Sonate a Tre*, op.1, is Corelli's four-movement church sonata as exemplified in the sonatas opp.1 and 3 (1681 and 1689), where sonorously contrapuntal slow movements alternate with livelier and lighter movements, also often contrapuntal.<sup>10</sup>

Alternative instrumentation is suggested in the closing sonata of Corbett's op.1, which is headed "Sonata XII a tromba o violino e haubois o violino". The first violin or trumpet part is a non-transposing part, idiomatically written for the trumpet with a compass extending from *c* to *c*<sup>2</sup>. The second movement gives the trumpet player a chance to rest his lip while his colleague plays an expressive *Largo*, before he joins in to conclude the sonata with two more active move-

<sup>10</sup> Of the twelve sonatas in Corbett's op.1 set, eight are cast in four movements corresponding in character to the respective movements in the Corellian church sonata model. Sonata no.6, for example, of Corbett's op.1, has: *Grave* – *Allegro* – *Adagio* – *Vivace*; no.8 has *Adagio* – *Allegro* – *Largo* – *Vivace*; no.10, *Adagio* – *Allegro* – *Grave* – *Allegro*. The four sonatas which are not in four movements, are in five, the addition in three of the cases being an extra slow movement of contrasting character placed in the middle, and in one case a fast one placed in the middle, so that in all cases the sonatas begin with a slow, impressive movement and end gaily at a pace.

ments. From the passages quoted from this sonata (Ex. 1), it will be seen that the writing is melodious — a characteristic shared by his English contemporaries — and remarkably reticent with regard to scalic flourishing. The finest melody in the sonata is entrusted to the oboe (or violin) in the second-movement Largo. It is rhythmically robust, generous in compass and monumental in character (Ex. 2).

Ex. 1 Sonata op. 1 no 12

Tpt Pastorale, Vivace (3rd movement)

Allegro (4th movement)

Ex. 2 Sonata op. 1 no 12

Largo Solo (ob./vn.)

Considering William Corbett's background as a violinist in theatre orchestras, and as a composer of incidental music to a number of plays, including successful productions of *Henry the Fourth or The Humours of Falstaff*, *Love Betray'd or The Agreeable Disappointment*, *As you find it*, and *The British Enchanters*,<sup>11</sup> it is hardly surprising that he should include a sonata in which a trumpet has a prominent part in his *XII Sonate a Tre*. The trumpet, and a particular kind of trumpet music, had for some years enjoyed favour with London theatre audiences. The Puritan revolution had silenced the stage in 1642, and for fourteen years public performances were forbidden. When the stern views of the Protectorate seemed

<sup>11</sup> Roger Fiske, *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1973), 591. Details of Corbett's contribution to these productions are also provided by Fiske, referred to under each production.

to be relaxing, dramatists ventured to find a way round the Cromwellian ban on spoken dialogue by writing stage entertainments to continuous musical accompaniment. Sir William D'Avenant, poet laureate under Charles I, obtained permission in 1656 to open to the public an "allegorical entertainment by declamation and music, after the manner of the Ancients", entitled *The First Day's Entertainment at Rutland House*.<sup>12</sup> An ambitious production, *The Siege of Rhodes*, followed later in the year. However, as Roger Fiske has pointed out in his book *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century*, D'Avenant showed no further interest in all-sung opera once the ban had been lifted, and this form of entertainment was a great rarity at the playhouses at the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>13</sup> Musical interludes, fanfares, dances, songs, overtures, were to continue to be regarded as essential ingredients, the provision of which attracted the services of most of the leading composers, and not least, of Henry Purcell. Corbett's contribution to the field comprises, besides the sonata already mentioned, a whole set of six sonatas op.3 (c. 1708) which, with this total of seven, puts him quantitatively third amongst his countrymen, behind Henry Purcell (with fifteen) and Daniel Purcell (with eight).<sup>14</sup>

In writing for trumpet and oboe as alternative instruments to violins in the last sonata of the op.1 set, Corbett embodies a tendency that many English composers were to show during the sixty years which followed, namely, to mark out the opening or closing piece of a set of sonatas or concertos, by giving the work a distinctive kind of instrumentation. An archaic, 'impressive' tone was occasionally given to the works in question by composers from the mid eighteenth century onwards. Corbett endows the sonata which opens his first publication with particular interest too, writing for the combination of violin, viola da gamba and basso continuo.

Sonatas for melodic instruments of contrasting *tessitura* were fairly common in the seventeenth century, before Corelli's trio sonatas for two violins and continuo came to have the influence which they did in favour of the latter instrumental combination. Corbett may have had experience of playing sonatas for the attractive violin, viola da gamba and continuo combination at the concerts run by Thomas Britton, the 'small-coal man', the catalogue of whose music sold by auction in December 1714 included,<sup>15</sup>

(lot)69. 4 sets by Lock, and Young's Sonatas, Farmer's Ayres, etc. 72. Krieger's 12 Sonatas.  
132. 2 sets by Becker, Rosenmüller in 2,3,4, and 5 parts.

<sup>12</sup> E. Legouis and L. Cazamian, *A History of English Literature* (London, 1957), 643.

<sup>13</sup> Fiske, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Holman, "The Trumpet Sonata in England", *Early Music*, October, 1976. According to Holman there is a complete copy of an Amsterdam edition of the op.3 trumpet sonatas in the library of Baron Carl de Geer, Leufsta Bruk, Sweden. Holman's article adds to the repertoire given in Don Smithers, *The Music & History of the Baroque Trumpet before 1721* (London, 1973).

<sup>15</sup> Hawkins, 792–93, and 807 for the information that Corbett used to play in Britton's concerts. William S. Newman, *The Sonata in the Baroque Era* (New York, 1972), discusses sonatas composed or published in Austria and Germany in the period ca. 1650–1700. He evaluates works for the S/B/bc combination by W. Young (212), J.P. Krieger (235), D. Becker (246) and J. Rosenmüller (249), but whether Britton had the works in question in his library is impossible to say. Proving that this instrumental combination was not as rare as might now be assumed, Newman discusses also sonatas by J.H. Schmelzer (215), P.F. Boeddecker (223), M. Kelz (223), J.M. Nicolai (235), P.H. Erlebach (243) and D. Buxtehude (252).

Ex. 3 Sonata op. 1 no 1

Adagio

Violin

Viola da gamba

Bassoon cont.

organ

Piano

Fuga Allegro

Piano

Ex. 4 Sonata op. 1 no 1

Adagio

Piano

Piano

Largo

Piano

Allegro

Piano

etc.

etc.

Corbett's sonata op.1 no.1 is a fine piece. The opening Adagio has a nobility of line and pace distinctly reminiscent of Corelli in its confidently formed periods of varying length, the echo effect rounding off the movement, and in particular the turn of phrase in bar 10. The viola da gamba is an active participant in the fugue which follows, whose line only occasionally doubles the continuo part. The principle of contrast operates as usual in this sonata, and the movement which follows is a slow violin solo for which the viola da gamba joins the continuo.

This movement is akin in style and spirit to the kind of *cantabile* slow movement Corelli has in his op.5 solo sonatas. These contain the music which so tantalized Corelli's English gentleman followers, and exposed their inability to

embellish the slow melodies appropriately, that music publishers found a ready market for 'graced' versions of the sonatas.<sup>16</sup> In the 1780s, Burney reflected,<sup>17</sup>

It was formerly more easy to compose than play an *adagio*, which generally consisted of a few notes that were left to the taste and abilities of the performer; but as the composer seldom found his ideas fulfilled by the player, *adagios* are now made more *chantant* and interesting in themselves, and the performer is less put to the torture for embellishments.

In this connexion it is not uninstructive to note that Corbett succeeds here in writing a slow movement which, on account of its melodic attractiveness and harmonic inevitability, creates a pleasing effect even when the impassioned rhythmic emphasis imparted through the Italian style of gracing is lacking. The sonata ends after a short, harmonic slow movement of contrasting character, with an *Allegro* of considerable vigour, in which the *viola da gamba* again assumes a share of the melodic responsibility (Ex. 3 and 4).

Corbett did not categorize in the title the kind of sonatas he had included in *XII Sonate a Tre, op.1*. That he had modelled them on the *sonata da chiesa* as he knew it from the work of Corelli has the interesting consequence that, like Corelli, he includes a number of dances in the sonatas, albeit unidentified. The unmistakeable character of the Italian Corrente may, for example, be heard in the *Vivace non Presto* of sonata no.2, second movement, while the fifth movement is just as clearly a *Gigue* (Ex. 5).

In reviewing the progress of English music, and particularly the way that the Italian style became established, Roger North recalled in the 1720s,<sup>18</sup>

One of the cheif (factors) was the coming over of the works of the great Corelli. Those became the only musick relished for a long time, and there seemed to be no satiety of them, nor is the vertue of them yet exhaled, and it is a question whether it will ever be spent, for if musick can be immortal, Corelli's consorts will be so.

If Corbett's op.1 sonatas are a tacit form of imitation, their source of inspiration is not to be mistaken. There is a movement in the *Six sonata's a 3° for two violins & thro-bass for the spinet or harpsicord. Consisting of preludes, allemands, corants, sarabands, gavots and jiggs, op.4 libro secondo* (c. 1713), to which Corbett gives a heading admitting his intention. The fourth sonata contains a *Gavotta* "In imitation of Correlli".

Corbett's flair for writing sprightly dance movements on the Italian model may be seen in both his sonatas and concertos. His *Six sonatas, op.3* of c. 1708, includes an additional *overture and aires in 4 parts*.<sup>19</sup> His op.4 is divided into two

<sup>16</sup> The publication, for instance, by Walsh & Hare, c. 1711, of *XII Sonata's or Solo's for a Violin a Bass Violin or Harpsichord. Compos'd by Arcangelo Corelli. His Fifth Opera. This Edition has y<sup>e</sup> advantage of haveing y<sup>e</sup> Graces to all y<sup>e</sup> Adagios and other places where the Author thought proper*. On this matter see also H.J. Marx, "Some unknown embellishments of Corelli's violin sonatas", *The Musical Quarterly*, January, 1975.

<sup>17</sup> Burney, ii, 10.

<sup>18</sup> John Wilson (ed.), *Roger North on Music* (London, 1959), 358.

<sup>19</sup> Consisting of: *Overture/Vivace/Scotch Air/Minuet*. Comparison of the op.3 and the *New Set of Tunes* (London, c. 1708) by Corbett, both of which are in The British Library, shows that the overture and airs published as a supplementary item in the op.3 are identical with the overture and the first three of the eight airs published in *A New Set of Tunes*. The headings differ, but the music is printed from the same plate. The British Library copy of the op.3 does not include the last five movements of the *New Set of Tunes*. These would seem to have been composed at least four years before they were published, as "a new Set of Aires for the Trumpet, Hautboys and Violins, compos'd by

#### Ex. 5 Sonata op. 1 no 2

Vivace non Presto

sets of six sonatas: *libro primo* being intended for recorders or flutes and *libro secondo* for violins with continuo. The individual movements in Corbett's *sonate da camera* – though he never uses this title – tend to be a little shorter than in his strictly-modelled *sonate da chiesa*.

There is a noteworthy variety both in the spelling of movement titles (Corrente/Corrente; Sarabanda/Saraband; Alleman/Allemanda/Allemend; Gig/Gigga), and in the choice of tempi designated. A prelude may reasonably be fast (op.4 *libro 1°* no.2) or slow (*ibid*, nos.3/4 and 6). Corbett obviously wants his Sarabands to be slow (no.4 *Largo*, no.3 *Adagio*), while his final movement in a suite has to be brisk, irrespective of what kind of dance it is, be it a *Gigue* (nos.1/5/6 *Allegro*, no.4 *Presto*), a *Gavotta* (no.3 *Presto*), or an *Air* (no.2 *Allegro*). His use of the word *Vivace* in connexion with the *Allemands* in nos.3/5/6 and the *Corrente* of no.1 may serve as a reminder that in the early eighteenth century a movement which was meant to be *Vivace* was *not* to go quickly.<sup>20</sup>

#### The concertos

Corbett's concertos form a significant part of his output, and an appraisal of his capabilities as an instrumental composer must naturally take these into consideration. They represent that part of his work which elicited most comment from

Mr Corbett", was performed as interval music at the Little Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, 7 June 1704 (entry under the date given, in *The London Stage 1660–1800. A Calendar of Plays, Entertainments and Afterpieces*, Carbondale, Illinois, 1960–62).

<sup>20</sup> The earliest indication in English may be seen in *A Short Explication of Such Foreign Words as are made Use of in Music Books*, which was "printed for J. Brotherton" in London, 1724. In this book, which had a long-lasting influence on subsequent dictionaries in English, a section is entitled, "Degrees of Time, or Movement in Musick, collected in their True and Proper Gradation" (page 95). In the middle of the scale come: "*Largo*, Slow or Gently. *Largo Assai*, or *Poco Largo*, not too Slow. *Vivace*, with some Life or Spirit. *Piu Vivace*, Lively. *Allegro Assai*, not too Brisk. *Allegro*, Brisk, or Briskly." In the course of a few decades the recommendation to play a *Vivace* movement "with some life or spirit", came to imply greater speed, and the normal interpretation exactly a century later shows considerable change. In J.F. Danneley's *An Encyclopaedia or Dictionary of Music* (London, 1825 – an ambitious pocketbook purporting to contain "nearly three thousand articles more than any English Musical Dictionary extant") *Vivace* is described as "a quick movement of light and elegant execution".

Hawkins and they would seem to have been highly regarded by Corbett himself in so far as he brought out a second, greatly enlarged, edition under the protection of a royal privilege. From the records which survive of benefit concerts in which Corbett took part, it may be gathered that concertos by Corbett were performed from 1711 onward. There is no way of telling if the "several new Concerto's for the Hautboy, Flute, German Flute, Trumpet, and other Instruments, compos'd by Mr Corbett", performed in 1713 were from a set of missing concertos op.5 or op.6, whether they were items taken from his sonatas opp.1 to 4, or whether these concertos were eventually published under the title *Le Bizzarie Universali... Concerto's in four parts for two violins, tenor & throbæse for y<sup>e</sup> harpsicord* in 1728. According to a *nota bene* on the titlepage of the latter, these concertos might be played "in 3 parts, 2 hautboys, flutes or German flutes".

There are two editions of the concertos. The first has the Italian title *Le Bizzarie Universali*, and consists of twelve concertos. The dedication is to the king ("Humillissimo Dedicato a Sua Maesta Christianissima"). It may confidently be dated on the basis of the announcement for Corbett's benefit concert on 20 March 1728, when "Mr Corbett's New Bizzaria's; on all the New Gusto's of Italy", were performed,<sup>21</sup> and also because a bookseller called Thomas Corbett advertised in June that year that the concertos had been published.<sup>22</sup> There are five different titlepages to the second edition, all in English, not Italian, and the whole collection comprises thirty-five concertos, arranged in three volumes, libro 1, 2 and 3. The three volumes were sold as separate sets although all were called 'Universal Bizzaries' op.8, which must have caused prospective purchasers some confusion.

The titlepage which probably appeared first was, "Printed for and Sold by y<sup>e</sup> Author & M<sup>r</sup> Benj<sup>n</sup> Cooke at the Golden Harp in New Street Cov<sup>t</sup> Garden", and dated 1742. Corbett obtained copyright for his works for a period of fourteen years, by means of a royal privilege dated 4 March 1742.<sup>23</sup> None of the other four titlepages is dated. The four read "London Printed for and Sold by the Author and Mr" (no name follows, nor the date of publication). From this it might be concluded that Corbett had fallen out with Benjamin Cooke and taken the step of seeking royal protection, in order to enjoy the profits alone. These four titlepages carry the warning that the concertos are published "By his Majesty's Royal Licence & Protection", and add the information "OPERA VIII", which was omitted when the first titlepage was engraved and had therefore to be added by hand. The first titlepage to appear described Corbett as "One of His Majesties Musicians in Ordinary". Subsequently this was corrected to "One of his Majesty's Musicians in Ordinary". The assertion on the

<sup>21</sup> *The London Stage*, 20 March 1728.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Humphries and W.C. Smith, *Music Publishers in the British Isles* (London, 1954), 117, article on Thomas Corbett. The advertisement is quoted in full, but its date and source are not given. These details may be noted: the two-line dedication to the king is omitted from the titlepage of the Violino Primo part. The concertos are said to be composed by William Corbett "Deletante". The music is printed in four part books, for Violino 1<sup>o</sup>, Violino 2<sup>o</sup>, Alto Viola and Organo o Violoncello, and appears on one side of the page only. The order of concertos no.1, "alla Parmigiana", and no.3, "alla Genoese", in the 1728 edition are reversed subsequently.

<sup>23</sup> Corbett's 'Humble Petition' to the king to grant him his 'Royal Lycence for the sole printing and publishing' of his works: The British Library, Add. MSS. 33, 057, f.115. A copy of the royal privilege may be seen in the Violino 1<sup>o</sup> part of Corbett's *Universal Bizzaries* (1742), The British Library, h.51 a.

first titlepage, that the concertos are "Contrived for two violins, German-flutes or hautboys, and may be played in three parts Adapted for all concerts, Publick and Private", was repeated with slight variation in subsequent titlepages, the interesting point being the reference to the use in the theatre as if such use were not a public concert: "Adapted for the Theatre's and all Concerts private & Publick". The five titlepages differ most noticeably with regard to layout, with regard to the precise information as to what the volumes contain, and with regard to the names of the dedicatees.<sup>24</sup>

The concertos are said to be in seven parts for "four violins, a tenor violin (called Alto Violin on the part) a violoncello with a thorough bass for a harpsicord". This is the indication given in three of the titlepages. Another one declares the thorough bass to be "for organ or harpsicord", while titlepage no.1 states that the continuo is "for organ and harpsichord" (my italics). In practice this might well be the ideal solution, and Corbett had clearly thought of it because he heads the parts "Organo o Violoncello" and "Basso Rip<sup>o</sup> o Concerto Grosso". The parts are different in detail and both are figured.

These concertos are called *Universal Bizzaries*, which Corbett asserts were "Compos'd on all the new Gusto's during his many Years residence in Italy" (on titlepages). It might be of interest, before considering the music itself, to look at the wording of the title a little more closely.

Corbett uses the word *Bizzaries* to imply things unusual, whimsical, strange and extravagant. The choice of such a title was at that time not unusual. While the majority of sonatas and concertos were published under a simple indication of what the work consisted of, e.g. six sonatas for violin and basso continuo, a sizable minority of works were issued under more fanciful titles. Corbett may have been prompted in this instance by a work of Giuseppe Valentini's published in 1721 by Walsh & Hare, London, entitled *Bizzarie per camera a tre*, op.2<sup>25</sup> Or possibly it was suggested by Vivaldi's op.4 concertos called *La Stravaganza*. If Corbett had not come across these in Italy, he would have met them in England through two publications which had come out in about 1720, the one by Walsh & Hare, the other by John Jones, also of London. The Jones edition was entitled *Two celebrated concerto's... one commonly call'd the Cuckow, and the other, out of his Extravagancas*. It is besides the point whether Corbett actually knew such works as Nicola Fontei's *Bizzarie poetiche poste in musica... a 1, 2, 3, voci* (1635), or Giovanni Maria Ruggieri's sonatas entitled *Bizzarie armoniche*, op.1 (1689),<sup>26</sup> or the suite for strings, in G major, by Telemann which opens with an overture entitled *La Bizarre* and ends to the call of the nightingale ('Rossignol'),<sup>27</sup> or even Francesco Antonio Bonporti's op.10, *Invenzioni a violino*

<sup>24</sup> Adding to the confusion caused by different titlepages, Corbett dedicated his concertos in this manner: libro 1, to Richard Lord Edgecombe; libro 2, to Francis Lord Brooke (two *different* dedications were printed), and also to Sir Coniers Darcy; libro 3, to John Duke of Rutland.

<sup>25</sup> It is indicative of the impression which this composer was trying to convey to his public, that he also published *Idee per Camera* op.4 (c. 1704), as well *XII Fantasie a tre*, op.3 (c. 1720). *British Union-Catalogue of Early Music* (London, 1957), ii, 1032.

<sup>26</sup> One of the composer's unusual tricks here, according to Newman (133), is that the cello player reads the violin part of a canonic sonata upside down.

<sup>27</sup> Horst Büttner, *Das Konzert in den Orchestersuiten Georg Philipp Telemanns* (Leipzig, 1935), 77.

*solo* (1712),<sup>28</sup> which contains movements bearing such capricious titles as *Bizaria*, *Capriccio*, *Fantasia* and *Scherzo*. 'Bizzarie' was an English vogue-word at the end of the seventeenth century, and Corbett cannot have avoided gaining rich associations around it. Roger North in his writings on music not infrequently uses it,<sup>29</sup> and examples are found in the titles of manuscripts dating from this period, e.g. *Diverse Bizzarie sopra la vecchia Sarabanda*, and *Aria burlesco con molto Bizzarie*, which are contained in a large collection in the British Library dating from c. 1695.<sup>30</sup>

This said, how did Corbett intend displaying his whimsical imagination? The answer is given in the line quoted from the titlepage: the concertos were composed "on all the new gusto's during his many years residence in Italy". He thus purports to model each concerto on the style of music popular in each of a series of chosen Italian cities, in addition to which he includes a number of different countries.

In setting out to draw the main characteristics of the musical styles which could be associated with different nations, Corbett was not a pioneer. The notion was obviously an attractive one for many composers. A few examples may suffice to illustrate the topical interest in this matter, an interest which lasted well on into the eighteenth century, eventually to be channelled into a spate of publications of national airs, and travel books.

The famous battle of words over the relative merits of French and Italian music initiated by François Raguenet's *Parallèle des Italiens et des Français en ce qui regarde la musique et les opéras* (1702), was yet to come when Giovanni Battista Vitali's *Varie sonate alla francese, & all 'Itagliana a sei stromenti, op.11* were published in 1684.<sup>31</sup> An interest in forming an opinion about the differences between national styles was evidently abroad, as North relates of King Charles II, "a professed lover of musick".<sup>32</sup>

Once the King had a fancy for a comparison to hear the singers of several nations, German, Spanish, Italian, French and English performe upon the stage in Whitehall.

Just a little earlier than Corbett published his *Le Bizzarie Universali*, four of François Couperin's suites were published under the collective title, *Les Nations* (1726). Three of the preludes to these suites are entitled, *La Françoise*, *L'Espagnole*, and *La Piemontaise*.<sup>33</sup> Georg Philipp Telemann's interest in this matter is shown in his suite entitled *Ouverture des Nations anciennes et modernes*,<sup>34</sup> which includes dances meant to portray, "Les Allemands anciens, Les Allemands modernes, Les Suédois anciens, Les Suédois modernes, Les Danois anciens, Les Danois modernes", while in his *Sonate accademiche, op.2*, Francesco Maria Vera-

<sup>28</sup> Newman, 193.

<sup>29</sup> Wilson, e.g. 293 and 295.

<sup>30</sup> A Hughes-Hughes, *Catalogue of Manuscript Music in the British Museum*, vol. 3 (London, 1909), 162 : Add. MSS. 35,043, item 70, f.112b and 80, f.116b.

<sup>31</sup> Newman, 137.

<sup>32</sup> Wilson, 350–51.

<sup>33</sup> Newman, 355.

<sup>34</sup> Büttner, 23–4, 77.

cini includes movements with such titles as "Scozzese" and "Polonese".<sup>35</sup> His contemporary and compatriot, Francesco Geminiani's last and possibly finest set of concertos op.7 (1746) includes as no.3 a concerto "composti di tre stili differenti", notably, the French, English (represented by an *Andante con due flauti*) and the Italian styles.<sup>36</sup> The interest in comparing national styles was to continue, and a particularly optimistic study was published some twenty years later, entitled *Sinfonia nel gusto di cinque Nazioni* (1768), by Karl Ditters (Dittersdorf).<sup>37</sup>

Corbett has thirty-five concertos in the set: sixteen of which are meant to portray the style of Italian cities (e.g. "alla Venetiana"), and seventeen would allegedly represent the taste of so many nations (e.g. "alla Todesca"), while two concertos are not tied to any particular subject, being an untitled set of variations and a concerto "Per le Capriciose". He had modelled his sonatas on the four-movement Italian *sonata da chiesa*, and the *sonata da camera*, which might have four, five or even more movements. When he came to write his concertos he followed the Venetian model, with three movements.<sup>38</sup>

In libro 3 an intriguing point may be observed, namely, that with the exception of the last one all these concertos are cast in the same mould: three movements arranged fast – slow – fast. From the material available it is not possible to say whether these concertos were composed later than the others, and might represent a firmer adherence to the model used so convincingly by Vivaldi in particular. Corbett had already composed a concerto "in the style of" all the leading Italian cities as well as of the most obvious (for an Englishman) musical nations. Libro 3 might, consequently, have been an afterthought, for the composition of which Corbett had to go farther afield for inspiration, to Portugal, Turkey, to Moscow, Hungary and the Scandinavian countries, Sweden and Denmark. In his libro of eleven concertos there is a higher incidence of key changes between movements than in the other two sets. Moreover, it is puzzling why only eleven concertos make up the set, when the conventional number was six or twelve, a convention Corbett had followed in the publication of his sonatas.

<sup>35</sup> Newman, 185–6. Looking back at what had happened in English music early in the eighteenth century, Charles Burney found Veracini's compositions, "too wild and flighty for the taste of the English at this time, when they regarded the sonatas of Corelli as models of simplicity, grace, and elegance in melody, and of correctness and purity in harmony." (Burney, ii, 990) He was more enthusiastic about the other great Italian violinist who arrived in England in 1714 the same year as Veracini, Francesco Geminiani, the man whom he says, "intrepidly stepped forth and convinced the musical world that Corelli had left his disciples a demesne that was still capable of higher cultivation and improvement" (Burney, ii, 990).

<sup>36</sup> Arthur Hutchings, *The Baroque Concerto* (London, 1961), 277–78.

<sup>37</sup> The composer arranges the movements in this manner: *Andantino* – *Tedesco*; *Allegro assai* – *Italiano*; *Allegretto* – *Inglese*; *Menuetto* – *Francese*, with a *Trio* marked 'Turco'; the finale is an *Allegro* in which sections are headed in succession *Tedesco*, *Italiano*, *Inglese*, *Tedesco*, *Francese*, *Tedesco*, *Turco* and *Tedesco*. (Percy Young, *The Concert Tradition*, London, 1965, 128).

<sup>38</sup> The majority of English Baroque concertos for strings published in the eighteenth century are in four movements. If Corbett's three-movement concertos were not accounted for in the statistical analysis, the proportion would be even higher than indicated in the present writer's, *The Concerto in England during the Eighteenth Century* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wales, 1967), 396. Twenty-two of Corbett's thirty-five concertos begin and end with fast or moderately fast movements, and have a slow movement in the middle. In eight cases the opening movement is slowest, and this is followed by two faster movements of contrasting character. There are two four-movement concertos, with alternating slow and fast movements, and one five-movement concerto, again with alternating slow and fast movements but with an additional fast finale. Reference will shortly be made to the concerto in eight movements, "alla Francese", and finally, there is a concerto which consists of variations which maintain the same gentle pace throughout.

Corbett's favourite keys, based on an analysis of this collection of concertos, would seem to be D and B<sup>b</sup> major (with five concertos in each key). These keys are followed in order of preference, by E<sup>b</sup> major (four concertos), A and E major (three concertos), F and G major (two concertos) after which come the keys which are used only once.<sup>39</sup> Contrast is provided through changing the metre in successive movements of a concerto. With the sole exception of the last concerto of all, Corbett introduces a change of metre in each concerto.<sup>40</sup> The closing concerto of the set, libro 3 no.11, is a set of variations, doubtless inspired by Corelli's variations on *La Follia* in the last of his op.5 solo sonatas for violin and continuo.

The concertos look disarmingly straight-forward. Despite the suggestion that they might be performed with the concertino parts taken by wind soloists (title-page no.5: "contriv'd for two German flutes or two Hautboys with y<sup>c</sup> Ripieni Violins"), most of the writing is far from ideal for wind instruments.<sup>41</sup> This was a not uncommon sales ploy. They are concertos written by a violin virtuoso idiomatically for his own instrument. Technically, they do not require a mastery of all the range of fingering and bowing details explored in the Baroque solo-sonata literature for the violin. The Violino Concertino 1<sup>o</sup> part seldom goes higher than d<sup>2</sup>, and only exceptionally up to f<sup>2</sup> (in concerto libro 3 no.3 "alla Danese"). There are, even so, some extremely tricky movements to play which require the utmost rhythmic precision and delicacy. Concerto no.11 in libro 1, "alla Paduana" is a case in point. This has throughout the first movement an across-the-strings figure for the violins which, in this author's experience, provided noticeable difficulties at an Allegro Assai tempo to a professional orchestra.

It is doubtful whether musicians playing the *Universal Bizzaries* in England in the mid eighteenth century would have recognized the city or nation whose musical taste was portrayed in Corbett's concertos "on all the new gusto's". Musicians today are even less likely to succeed, and may feel inclined to agree with the scathing comment passed by Hawkins in his *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music* in 1776,<sup>42</sup>

the styles of the various kingdoms in Europe, and of divers cities and provinces in Italy are professed to be imitated; that is to say, to give a few of them, the several styles of Milan, Rome, Naples, Florence, Bologna, Brescia, Tyrol, England... etc. The proposal was ridiculous; for in music, composed according to the principles generally known and received, there can be no such discrimination of style as will enable the hearer to distinguish the music of one country, much less one city, from another.

<sup>39</sup> Seventeen concertos retain the same tonic key throughout, while thirteen provide relief by introducing a movement in the relative major or minor for one movement. Other contrasts of key are provided by means of an excursion to the dominant (two concertos), the dominant minor, the subdominant and the tonic minor.

<sup>40</sup> He does not show an appreciable preference with regard to the use of duple or triple metre; fifty-five movements are composed in  $\frac{2}{4}$  or C time, while sixty-one have a time signature of  $\frac{3}{8}$ ,  $\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $\frac{6}{8}$  or  $\frac{12}{8}$ .

<sup>41</sup> Corbett refers specifically to the use of two oboes in concerto libro 3, no.7, "alla Portugese", while in the Minuet of his concerto "alla Todesca", libro 1 no.7, there is a reference to corni da caccia, although parts are not provided separately. No viola part is found for libro 3 in the only complete set of all thirty-five concertos known, in the Rowe Music Library, University of Cambridge. This has most probably been lost in the course of time, but it makes little difference: the viola parts are uninteresting, and as long as the continuo group includes a competent harpsichord player or organist, nothing vital will be missing harmonically. Corbett was himself aware of the dearth of viola players then, because he gives this injunction to his continuo players, in the organ and cello part of concerto no.9 in libro 1, "Play none of y<sup>c</sup> Alto Keys but when there wants y<sup>c</sup> Viola part".

<sup>42</sup> Hawkins, 823.

#### Ex. 6 Libro 1. No 5 "Alla Cremonese"



#### Libro 1. No 6 "Alla Venetiana"



Hawkins is surprisingly insensitive here to the much-discussed controversy over French and Italian musical styles, which musicians in the eighteenth century would certainly have been aware of, but it is most likely that musicians then, as now, would have enjoyed the variety of movements, and not put too much weight on the composer's claim to the local flavour of each particular concerto. The writing is fluent, the music attractive, and there may be a reluctance to dispute the composer's assertion that no.5 in libro 1 is typically Cremonese, for example, or that the concerto following after it in the same libro is not "alla Venetiana". The main thematic material from these concertos may be seen at Ex. 6. The concertos are clearly different from one another in spirit, although both exaggerate characteristics of the Venetian style: in the concerto "alla Cremonese", both the first and last movements open with persistent, alternating octave figures to establish the tonality beyond doubt, and Vivaldi's predilection for hemming his themes about the tonic chord in various positions is imitated in Corbett's concerto "alla Venetiana". Something of the exciting rhythmic drive and energy which makes Vivaldi's music so rewarding to play and listen to may also be felt in the thematic material quoted. This is the style which pervades the whole set, including the concerto "alla Francese". True to convention, Corbett has an impressive concerto to close what was the first set he published, later to be libro 1, in the second edition. Twice the length of the other concertos, it consists of eight moderately long movements. In this respect, at least, he correctly portrays the spirit of the French suite, comprised of many movements of contrasting character though not of too violently contrasting tempo (Ex. 7).

Ex. 7 Libro 1. No 12 "Alla Francese"

The fourth movement of this fine concerto is an Aria: cantabile but intense, its throbbing, harmonically sturdy accompaniment and rich texture contrast with the airy Minuet and Gavotta which follow. Corbett has a partiality for repeating the opening rhythmic configuration of a melody. By means of such repetition, a balanced structure is built up which in dance music is entirely appropriate, although in his longer movements this can be a weakness.<sup>43</sup>

The amateur music clubs, or gentlemen's orchestral societies, for whom these compositions were intended, and the music publishers who supplied the market with the parts, liked uniformity. It was convenient to be able to buy sets of concerto parts scored for a concertino group of two violins, cello/viola da gamba and harpsichord/organ, with a supporting group of violins in two parts, violas and "Basso Ripieno". However, despite this conventional, fixed, distribution of parts, a diversity in orchestral writing may be heard in Corbett's concertos. The concerto-grosso treatment is certainly the most frequently encountered, but a single

<sup>43</sup> It is interesting to see that besides including an Italian Aria and a Gavotta, Corbett had no compunction about also having a typical seventeenth-century English dance in this French suite. This is a "Round O", the moderate syncopation of which is contained in a series of antiphonal passages where solo and tutti alternate in a style reminiscent of Corelli. The concertos are of interest historically – quite apart from their musical attractiveness – not least on account of this kind of variety. Corbett brings together a rich mixture of elements, thus providing us now with an Englishman's view in the early eighteenth century of current forms like the sonata da chiesa, the suite, theme and variations, the operatic aria and the simple ballad tune, to which he adds more complex structures like fugue and ritornello form. In the one kind of movement his writing is contrapuntal and harmonically rich, while in another, he relies unashamedly only on melodic appeal.

soloist also emerges for the occasional movement, while there are also movements in a *concerto a quattro* style, for the full orchestra without any solo parts at all. An impassioned slow movement allow us to hear Corbett's handling of a single soloist, while the sonorous Aria in the concerto "alla Francese" provides an example of his continuous full orchestral texture.

Fugue was not infrequently chosen as the form for Allegro movements in concertos. As many as thirteen English composers included fugues in a total of forty-nine concertos published before 1760.<sup>44</sup> Unlike some of his contemporaries, and in particular John Stanley, Charles Avison, John Alcock and John Humphries, who regularly included fugues in their concertos,<sup>45</sup> Corbett did so only on this one occasion, and then only because he had to do so; it was expected as the second part of a French overture. Clearly, he deferred to the point of view which a slightly later Italian writer put into these words.<sup>46</sup>

a student in the harmonic art must never neglect practising the composition of all sorts of fugues, not only in the limited manner of those called real fugues, but also in all sorts of imitations, *not for the public pleasure*, but for his own study. [my italics]

His concerto fugue is not a closely-woven piece of work. Once he has finished the exposition he drops the material of the fugue subject in its original form completely, and spins on using the rhythm with which the subject begins in points of continuous imitation and alternation between concertino and tutti.

Most of his faster movements are in two sections, both of which are repeated. Some are simple binary movements in dance form. The dances appearing most frequently are the Minuet,<sup>47</sup> and the Gavotta.<sup>48</sup> Other dances may be identified, though not named.<sup>49</sup> Rather surprisingly, Corbett makes little use of the Gigue. A lively Gigga is provided as the finale of his concerto "alla Francese", but despite the fact that Corbett obviously likes to round off a concerto with a lithe and lilting movement, to the extent of writing twenty-six of his finales in triple metre to be taken at a quick tempo, the jerky rhythmic movement characterizing the Gigue is little in evidence.

The appeal of other movements is attributable to the success with which familiar and unfamiliar material is integrated by means of the ritornello principle. Corbett's approach is confidently uncomplicated. He is not an intellectual com-

<sup>44</sup> Owain Edwards, *The Concerto in England*, 320.

<sup>45</sup> Stanley, op.2 nos.1,2,3,5 and 6; Avison, op.2 nos.3,4,5,6 and 7 and op.6 nos.3,4,5,6,9,11; Alcock, concertos nos.1,3,4 and 6; Humphries, op.2 nos.2,5,9 and 10 and op.3 nos.2,4,8 and 12.

<sup>46</sup> G. Antoniotto, *L'Arte Armonica or a Treatise on the Composition of Music* (London, 1760), 93. For a review of English attitudes to fugue, reference is made to Owain Edwards. "The Chiefest Flower in Figurate Descant", *The Music Review*, vol.31 no.2, 1970.

<sup>47</sup> Two in the concerto "alla Francese", and one in each of: libro 1 nos.7 and 10 and libro 2 no.8.

<sup>48</sup> Libro 2 no.8, and libro 1 nos.4,8 and 12.

<sup>49</sup> The opening movement of concerto "alla Tirolese", libro 2 no.8 is headed Largo, but its distinctive rhythm is that of the Sarabande. This forms an original opening to the suite constituting that concerto. There should, perhaps, be more reason to expect a sarabande to be included, if in any at all, in the concerto "alla Spagnola". And this expectation is not disappointed – although it comes as the first movement, not as the gentle, slow movement later on. Here Corbett writes a strong, almost aggressive opening. It is marked Andante staccato, and the urgent feeling present is not to be mistaken. Another sarabande may be seen in the concerto "alla Scocese", libro 2 no.11, where it comes between a typical Italian-style Allegro and a finale, Allegro *Tempo di Pastorale*, which might have started life as a reel. Akin to this dance in its busy movement is the Furlano finale of the concerto "alla Venetiana", libro 1 no.6, the incipit of which may be seen in Ex. 6.

poser. Ingenuity of the kind shown by Vivaldi and J.S. Bach, in the tightly integrated ritornello movements of their concertos, is absent. The number of ritornelli varies from three ("alla Napolitana") to eight ("alla Suedese"), without any particular structure appearing to dominate. Corbett relies to a marked extent on the melodic and rhythmic character of his material to create an impression of cohesion. His themes are often characterized by an assertive, idiomatic style of string writing showing considerable verve and energy, with light, rapidly-repeated notes and the repetition of short figures appearing frequently. Episodes are defined by changes of instrumentation, often giving prominence to the Violino Primo Principale, though never for long, twelve to sixteen bars at the most. Wide-ranging modulations are foreign to his style, but he makes dramatic use of the tonal hiatus, a device he shared with most late-Baroque Italian composers (passing, for example, without modulation from F major to G minor, or from D minor to B<sup>b</sup> major).

An impression of Corbett's handling of ritornello form may be obtained from the scheme which follows, giving the keys and the disposition of material in the finale of his concerto "alla Suedese", op.8, libro 3, no.5. The opening twelve bars are represented by the letter 'A', and b.13 – 26 by 'B'. The ritornello, composed of A and B, is rounded off with a cadence in the tonic key of B<sup>b</sup> major before the first episode begins in b.26. If the material of this episode is represented by the letter 'C', the following analysis may be obtained.

Bar no.	1	13	26	44	52	60	74	83
Material	A	B	C :  : A	A	B	C	B	
Key	B <sup>b</sup>	C min/B <sup>b</sup>	F	F	G min	Modulatory	G min	C min/D min
	99	109	121	133		144		
	C	A	B	C				
	D min	B <sup>b</sup>	Modulatory	B <sup>b</sup>				

The auditive impression of integration is even more positive than this analysis might imply, because A and B are both repeated-note figures. The passage beginning at b.99 is a short build up over a dominant pedal to a point at which the soloist would improvise a cadenza – one would assume the second time only<sup>50</sup> – before the last appearance of the ritornello.

A glance at Corbett's themes is enough to discover how he accumulates momentum, by means of the repetition of short figures. Figures are reiterated, and parts of phrases containing them are repeated until a balance phrase structure is obtained. This repetition makes for harmonic dullness, which Corbett attempts to compensate for in rhythmic energy, with a driving quaver movement in the bass. Invariably, in the faster movement, it is the rhythmic impetuosity and melodic fluency which first impress the hearer. The composer's control of harmony and texture, which are equally well managed, get pushed into the background. Harmonically, the slow movements are usually more interesting, as may

<sup>50</sup> For some thoughts on the placing of the cadenza, see the present author's article, "The Cadenza in Eighteenth-century English Concerto Fugues", *The Music Review*, vol. 36 no.2, 1975.

#### Ex. 8

Largo Siciliana

be seen in Ex. 8, where the opening is given of the Largo in concerto "alla Siciliana". This is one of the few obvious examples in the whole set where Corbett refers musically to the 'subject' of the concerto. The Siciliana became one of the more popular slow dance movements in the late Baroque, not least on account of Vivaldi's frequent use of it. Corbett's Siciliana is placed in the relative minor key of the busy movement which opens the concerto. It begins with a dignified call to attention, which establishes the characteristic lilting rhythm while it also gives the listener time to get used of the new tonic chord. This is a necessary precaution, for straight away he is taken on a safe but colourful harmonic course. The chromatically-descending bass line passes by way of an augmented sixth to the dominant, and from b.9 to 14 follows a sequence taking the long way round from the tonic to the dominant again. This attractive passage leads to a telling major-minor conflict at b.15–19, with false relations produced by the use of F and F# in alternating bars. The notably bright string texture with which the movement begins is maintained in the second half, with violins and violas placed in a high *tessitura*.

The harmonic element predominates in this particular movement. A more coherent balance of elements is achieved in Corbett's concerto "alla Suedese". Here the slow movement is also a gentle Siciliana, though it is not identified as such. The melancholy and grace with which Corbett imbues the music are a flattering comment on Swedish taste, which the composer purports to portray in this concerto. Finally, reference must also be made to Corbett's ornate solo movements, which would seem to draw their inspiration from the operatic aria. The most extended of these, and the one which in its *da capo* structure shows its origin most clearly, is the Largo in concerto "alla Moscovita", libro 3 no. 4. It opens as if the music is going to be built upon a ground bass, but it soon becomes clear that this was not intended to continue. The violin takes the place of the *prima donna* and demonstrates that it too is capable of sensitivity and expression in a confidently soaring, cantabile melody.<sup>51</sup>

It will be evident, particularly from the musical illustrations provided in this review of Corbett's instrumental music, that a typically English diversity of early eighteenth-century styles may be observed. The polyphonic writing of the sonatas, in imitation of Corelli, may seem decidedly old fashioned, coming from the composer who also wrote concertos which in general are non-contrapuntal pieces evincing the unmistakable influence of Vivaldi.

<sup>51</sup> The concerto in which Violino Primo Principale gets the longest solo is the last of all, the variations on an 'Aria' theme. Corbett also writes variations in concertos libro 1 no.10, and libro 2 nos.5 and 8.