



Frauke Hess *Komm, Süßes Kreuz!*  
The German viol in fantastic dialogues

(Coviello, COV 21211, rec 2011)

“The *stylus phantasticus* is the freest and least restricted style... since one sometimes uses one idea and sometimes another, as all sorts of otherwise unusual passages, obscure ornaments, ingenious turns and embellishments are produced.” (Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, Hamburg, 1739)

Inspired by the daring of the Italian violin virtuosi, German musicians delighted in this unpredictable rhetorical style in the second half of the 17th century. At this time the viol flourished and its ability to imitate the nuances of speech lent it to this genre. Hess gives us a feast of the *stylus phantasticus* embracing the viol. She opens with the resonant *Sonata Terza* for violin, viol and continuo by Philipp Heinrich Erlebach (1657-

1714); there is much nimble playing in the *Ciaconne*, and the *Finale-Adagio* encompasses fantastical semiquavers and bowed vibrato, the latter used to mark particularly tender moments. The players also perform *Sonata IV* for the same combination by Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707). Bach’s *Komm, Süßes Kreuz* is played at a sensitive tempo but the kingly dotted rhythms on the viol could at times be sharper. August Kühnel (1645-c1700), a leading viol virtuoso, is represented by two of his sonatas: *Sonata III* for two viols cast in a single movement of contrasting tempi and spirit and *Sonata IX* for a solo viol with continuo which opens with rich double stopping, ably played and well tuned. An attractive three-movement ‘concerto’ by Johann Michel Kühnel (c1665-after 1730) for viol, lute and continuo completes the disc. A charming CD of some unusual music.

Lucy Robinson