

New Editions

The Music of the Count of St. Germain: An Edition

Ilias Chrissochoidis

The Count of St. Germain (?–1784) is the most enigmatic of Handel's contemporaries. It is generally assumed he was a member of the exiled Rákóczy family. First appearing under this title in the early-1740s, he moved around Europe, acquiring the confidence and admiration of Louis XV and Madame Pompadour, the Prince of Wales, and the Prince of Hesse-Cassel. Contemporary descriptions of his talents penned by Horace Walpole, Voltaire, and Casanova, range from astonishment to ridicule and spite. Among his unofficial diplomatic missions, the one for the rapprochement of France and England in 1760, at the height of the Seven Years' War, is well documented.

Musicological interest in St. Germain centers on his years in Britain (mid-1740s), where he acquired fame for his performances, especially on the violin, and his compositions. Charles Burney identified St. Germain as a leading spirit in London's private music concerts and confirms the popularity of his Italian arias. We are fortunate to be able to verify these claims in a small though



Count of St Germain by unknown artist

highly original body of works, including a collection of over forty Italian arias, seven solos for the violin, six trio sonatas, and several English songs.

Highly intelligent and often endearing, the music of the Count of St. Germain deserves both publication and performance. Having acquired copies of all his extant works from several US libraries (Library of Congress, Folger, Houghton) and now from the British Library, I am preparing to submit a proposal for a 2-volume edition of his music:

Vol. 1: Italian arias. *Musique raisonnée selon le bon sens, aux Dames Angloises qui aiment le vrai gout en cet art* (1750); *Favourite Songs in the Opera called L'Incostanza Delusa* (1747) (3 arias contributed by SG).

Vol. 2: Instrumental music and English songs. *Six Sonatas for two violins with a bass for harpsichord or violoncello* (1750); *Seven Solos for a Violin* (1758); *English Songs* (1747-50).

There is an effort to perform and podcast representative works of his through the Chamber Music Club concert series at University College London.