

THE VIHUELA BOOK "EL PARNASO"  
BY ESTEBAN DAZA

An Introductory Study

The *Libro de Musica en cifras para Vihuela intitulado el Parnasso* (Valladolid, 1576) by Esteban Daza stands as the last surviving contribution to an important branch of the solo instrumental tradition. It is the last known music expressly for an instrument which held a revered position in Spanish musical life for nearly three centuries. During this period the vihuela's function was extended from being a participant in the performance of ensemble music, to a position in the sixteenth century which also made it the vehicle for some of the most beautiful and cultivated music produced in its time and homeland.

The work of the vihuelistas<sup>1</sup> reflects a sensitivity to, and mastery of, the technical and aesthetic problems of composition as well as an awareness of the capabilities and sonorities of their instrument. The general style and guiding principles of their music can be seen in their adherence to polyphonic tradition. While lutenists elsewhere in Europe were working towards a more freely independent style, the Spaniards were absorbed in realizing a satisfactory solution to the problem of the assimilation of such polyphonic principles as linear equality, independence, and continuity into an instrumental idiom. The direction of compositional interest is reflected in the repertoire itself. The greater part consists of free form *fantasias*, largely of the imitative type, and intabulations of vocal works. Instead of converting what were clearly the technical disadvantages of their instrument, in terms of the vocally based polyphonic tradition, into advantages in a new style as lutenists were doing, the vihuelistas devoted more energy to exploring their instrument fully, so as to overcome its stylistic inadequacies. Hence, there began a more consistent utilization of chording possibilities on the higher reaches of the fingerboard (i.e. above the fifth fret) instead of limiting chording to the lower areas with rapid running passages along the

<sup>1</sup> Composers and works are listed by many authors: see W. Apel, *Harvard Dictionary of Music* (2nd ed., London, 1968), entries Vihuela, Spanish Music II; N. Fortune, 'The Spanish Vihuela Books', in *The New Oxford History of Music* (London, 1968), Vol. IV p.127ff.; J. Myers, 'Vihuela Technique', *Journal of the Lute Society of America* I (1968), pp. 15-18.

first course as is generally characteristic of lute music.<sup>2</sup> Example 1, from Daza's eighth *Fantasia*<sup>3</sup> serves as an illustration. This technical expansion and exploration is one of the areas in which his work represents a culmination of style rather than the petering out of a tradition.

Example 1: *Fantasia VIII* (bars 6-14)



Available research on the vihuela has failed to discover mention of Daza in any contemporary source beside his own book. Nothing has been found to indicate his dates, his occupation, or his station in society. The present study can therefore only make a number of projections based on the information in *El Parnaso* itself. It is apparent that Daza was a man of decided genius. The works contained in *El Parnaso* display most competent musicianship in their composition and arranging. Furthermore, many of them require a highly developed technique, and although it is without substantiation,<sup>4</sup> it is reasonable to assume on the basis that vihuela and lute music come from a tradition where the composer is also the performer, that Daza was capable of playing his own works, and that therefore he may also be regarded as a virtuoso performer in his own right. It is also evident from the epigram that he was an educated man, with some knowledge of classical language and culture. If we accept the speculation that he was a virtuoso performer, then he must have lived in a manner which permitted him the time to devote himself to instrumental study. There is no reason to suspect however, due to his obscurity and the fact that the book's licence<sup>5</sup> describes him merely as a 'ratepayer (*vezino*) of Valladolid' that he was a member of the nobility. It is likely therefore that Daza was either a musician attached to some court or noble household at or near Valladolid, or perhaps himself a well-to-do dilettante who could afford to indulge himself in such pleasurable activity.

The publication of *El Parnaso* in 1576 places it forty years after Milán's *El Maestro* (1536) and twenty-two years after its immediate predecessor, Fuenllana's *Orphénica Lyra* (1554). Considering the regularity of publications between the books of Milán and Fuenllana, the interval between the publication of *Orphénica Lyra* and *El Parnaso* is significantly large. The continuity of style and technique found in the two books suggests that the performance practice was kept very much alive and, as Ward

<sup>2</sup> The difference in sonority, and the tuning problems resulting from the excessive use of the first course probably account for the stringing difference between the vihuela and lute. The *chantrelle* of the lute was a single string while the others were generally double, with the occasional exception of the second course. All courses of the vihuela were double strung, thus giving more uniformity of sound.

<sup>3</sup> *El Parnaso*, fol. 11.

<sup>4</sup> The only mention of his being a player is in the Epigram (leaf iiv): *numine Dazzam ... dignaris Cithara, cithara* being Latin cognate for vihuela.

<sup>5</sup> I.e. the licence granted by King Philip II for the book's printing, and stating the conditions of copyright (leaf iv).

points out, that it was only the inflationary state of the Spanish economy that limited the luxury of printing.<sup>6</sup>

*El Parnaso* itself comprises 113 folios of music, each side of which carries three hexagrams of tablature. These are preceded by four leaves which carry the title, licence, dedication, epigram, explanation of the tablature, and errata; and are followed by two leaves which contain the table of contents and colophon. The book is divided into three *libros*, each of which is an assemblage of works of a distinct type, and of similar length. The first *libro* consists of twenty-two original *fantasias*; the second comprises thirteen motet intabulations for accompanied voice; and the third *libro* contains twenty-five secular vocal works for accompanied voice and two intabulations of French chansons for vihuela solo. The book is systematically organized and reflects a somewhat didactic approach although the technical difficulty of the pieces places them far beyond the range or capabilities of a beginner. The book's format is therefore didactic in spirit only, not like Milán's *El Maestro* which is arranged with pieces of progressively increasing difficulty specifically designed for those with little musical knowledge. Daza's brief explanation of tablature certainly aims at the beginner and assumes only a prior knowledge of basic mensural notation. It serves as an instruction for those unfamiliar with tablature, but is more of a formality than a necessity. Daza, in fact, excuses the brevity of his explanation by saying: 'And I shall always be as short as possible, because I cannot say much that others have not already dealt with.'<sup>7</sup> Mudarra, Valderrábano and Fuenllana had all been quite specific and detailed with regard to technique and other aspects of performance. Daza makes no further contribution to our understanding of these areas.

The first *libro* is the most highly organized. It begins with eight *fantasias* in four parts, arranged in order of mode. These are followed by four *fantasias a 3*, another six in four voices and finally four *de pasos largos para desenvolver las manos*.<sup>8</sup> Daza gives the user of this first *libro* a guide to the difficulty of each piece by placing at its head the letter F (*fácil*) or D (*difícil*). He also aids the user's comprehension of the polyphony by placing commas at the top right hand corner of the figures in the tablature which in the four voice works represent the tenor part, and in the three voice works, the alto. Daza advises the player that he can sing these parts if he wishes. Other than the four final *fantasias*, the works of the first *libro* are in similar imitative style. Daza's compositional technique is straightforward and uncomplicated. Each *fantasia* is a succession of short themes which undergo polyphonic treatment. Daza introduces each theme, enunciates it, and when its message has been conveyed, it is disposed of by means of a standardized cadence. The attitude to form, then, is quite flexible with no prerequisites to ensure unity other than fundamental assumptions

<sup>6</sup> John M. Ward, 'The Vihuela de Mano and its Music (1536-1576)' (unpublished dissertation, New York University, 1953), p. 97.

<sup>7</sup> *y sere lo mas breue que pudiere, porque no podre dezir tanto que otros no lo ayan tratado* (leaf 3).

<sup>8</sup> 'In large steps to unravel the hands'. *Fantasias* of this type, included in several of the vihuela books, suggest an additional didactic function similar to the modern use of scales for technical development.

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of harmony, tonality and continuity of rhythm. Daza is able however more closely to unify and tighten the shape of his works by creating a succession of themes which do bear some resemblance to one another. His ability to do this gives his work the sort of polished cohesion that is epitomized by the Italian madrigal. It was perhaps only Fuenllana who achieved, or attempted to achieve, such a similarly condensed and succinct style. Most compositions by the other vihuelistas, with some exceedingly beautiful

Example 2:  
*Fantasia II*  
 Fantasia por el  
 segundo tono,  
 senalase la clave de  
 feauf quinta, en  
 tercero traste.

"EL PARNASO"

A guitar fretboard diagram for the first system, showing a six-string guitar with a capo on the first fret. The strings are numbered 1 to 6 from top to bottom. Fingering numbers (1-5) are placed on the strings to indicate fingerings for various chords and notes.

Musical notation for the first system, consisting of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The music features a melody in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef.

A guitar fretboard diagram for the second system, showing a six-string guitar with a capo on the first fret. Fingering numbers (1-5) are placed on the strings to indicate fingerings for various chords and notes.

Musical notation for the second system, consisting of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The music features a melody in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. A measure number '23' is indicated at the beginning of the system.

A guitar fretboard diagram for the third system, showing a six-string guitar with a capo on the first fret. Fingering numbers (1-5) are placed on the strings to indicate fingerings for various chords and notes.

Musical notation for the third system, consisting of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The music features a melody in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. A measure number '25' is indicated at the beginning of the system.

A guitar fretboard diagram for the fourth system, showing a six-string guitar with a capo on the first fret. Fingering numbers (1-5) are placed on the strings to indicate fingerings for various chords and notes.

Musical notation for the fourth system, consisting of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The music features a melody in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. A measure number '30' is indicated at the beginning of the system.

A guitar fretboard diagram for the fifth system, showing a six-string guitar with a capo on the first fret. Fingering numbers (1-5) are placed on the strings to indicate fingerings for various chords and notes.

Musical notation for the fifth system, consisting of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The music features a melody in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. A measure number '35' is indicated at the beginning of the system.

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exceptions, are more rambling in their manner and less consistent and involved in their counterpoint. As a typical example of Daza's compositional style, *Fantasia II*<sup>9</sup> in the hypodorian mode has been chosen (see Example 2).

The first eight bars show the exposition of the first theme, passing through each of the four voices to the cadence at bar 9 where the second theme is introduced. The voices enter canonically at an increasingly large time interval and the chromatic sharpening of the third note of the first two entries is dropped in the following pair for harmonic reasons. Aspects of the theme's image are echoed by the non-exposing voices. Its fragmented repetition in the soprano voice (bars 5 and 6) shows a certain subtlety created by rhythmic as well as melodic alteration. Little extraneous matter is introduced in the section other than the variety provided by the semi-quaver figures (bars 3, 4). These however are less typical. It is Daza's ability to restrict material which is a prime cause of the success of his works. The cadential *redoble* given in the soprano part in bar 8 announces the supplanting of one theme by another. In the following bar the bass voice introduces the second theme which is then similarly treated. In *Fantasia II*, Daza uses six themes:

Example 3:

Theme 1 (bars 1-9)

Theme 2 (bars 9-12)

<sup>9</sup> Fol. 2v.



Their similarities are considerable. The first two travel by different routes from d up to f, and their shapes establish a basic identity for the subsequent themes. The second, fourth and sixth themes are all quite similar having common features of a rising minor third and descending stepwise conclusions. The contours with which the second and fourth themes begin give them yet stronger similarity. The first, third and fifth themes also share common traces by virtue of the repeated pitches on which they begin, but the third and fifth are more closely linked by their ascending fourths. The alternate rather than adjacent themes bear the closest resemblance and whether rationally or intuitively designed, it shows the way in which natural balance and interest are infused into the work. All but the first theme begin on a weak beat and so a greater similarity of melodic inflection is induced by rhythmic means. The tonal scheme of the piece strongly maintains a centre of d except for the short life of the second theme where it changes to g. The statement of each theme in each voice consistently occurs and so another point of continuity is achieved.

In *Fantasia V*<sup>10</sup>, Daza deviates from his general practice of mono-thematic polyphony by pairing the voices into interdependent units. This technique is employed however for only the first section of the work where the upper two and lower two voices are paired. The beginning of *Fantasia XXI*<sup>11</sup> is shown in Example 4 as representative of the *fantasia de pasos largos*. Its style is clearly idiomatic, and hence its polyphony is legitimately imperfect; a fact reflected by the similarly irregular style of transcription needed meaningfully to convey its nature. Loose sequential patterns are seen in the figurative upper line and thus a sense of order curbs any aimless meandering. Daza also avoids monotony in this piece, as well as the others of its type, by interspersing the passages of brisk *redobles* with counterpoint similar to that shown in the previous example.

The thirteen motet intabulations for voice with vihuela accompaniment which make up the second *libro* of *El Parnaso* differ from those of the third *libro* by their sacred nature rather than by any stylistic or technical difference; nor is there any inconsistency in the editorial approach employed. For this reason they shall not be discussed here, with the following exception. *Nigra sum sed formosa* by Thomas Crecquillon<sup>12</sup>, the first composition

<sup>10</sup> Fol. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Fol. 31.

<sup>12</sup> Fol. 35v.

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Example 4: *Fantasia XXI*, opening bars

Fantasia de passos  
largos para desenvolver  
las manos

intabulated in the second *libro*, is the only five-voice composition in *El Parnaso* and one of the few in the whole repertoire.<sup>13</sup> Its performance raises an issue which has caused considerable controversy amongst scholars of vihuela music: the problem of whether or not the vocal part should be doubled on the vihuela. Obviously, the inclusion of the fifth part in the accompaniment taxes the performer's ability to the fullest, but the fact remains that the intabulation is made, like all those by Daza, in such a manner as to permit its inclusion in the accompaniment, or even to allow solo instrumental performance of the piece. The intabulation of the work is made in the same way as all Daza's: on one hexagram of tablature with the vocal line shown by commas. With respect to the problem of doubling, its solution in the present work is made more obvious. The line indicated to be sung is the bass part, and it is felt here that its exclusion from the

<sup>13</sup> The only other five-voice composition of those presently available in modern edition is the *Cancion* "¿Quién me otorgase, senora?" by Juan Vásquez, intabulated by Valderrábano. His version carries the four lower voices as the instrumental accompaniment while the sung *tiple* is noted on a separate mensural staff. His book also includes a number of five- and six-voice works for two vihuelas. See E. de Valderrábano. *Silva de Sirenas*, ed E. Pujol, Monumentos de la Musica Espanola XXII, XXIII (Barcelona, 1965), Vol. I pp. 44-47.



accompaniment would be detrimental to the polyphony and the balance of the work.

Example 5: *Nigra sum sed formosa*, bars 13-16

The other composers whose work is intabulated in the second *libro* are Maillart, Richafort, Simon Buleau, Pedro Guerrero, Francisco Guerrero and Juan Basurto.

With the exception of the two French chanson intabulations, the twenty-five compositions which comprise the third *libro* are secular Spanish songs, largely if not entirely intabulations of vocal works. They represent five musico-poetic forms: the *romance*, *soneto*, *canción*, *villanesca* and *villancico*.

The only *romance* included by Daza is *Enfermo estaua Antioco* (Sick lay Antioch, Prince of Syria).<sup>14</sup> Its nine stanzas are of regular structure. The epic is surely of an earlier date, but no other version is extant. The shape of the vocal line is characteristic of the *romance*. It has a narrow range, a seventh, and moves by step or by thirds, with the notes being of long duration. The homophonic texture of the accompaniment adds to the solemnity of the style and while preventing rhythmic vitality provides an ideal basis for instrumental elaboration. This gives weight to J. B. Trend's assertion that instrumental improvisation during the performance of *romances* was probably a major factor in the early development of variation form in Spain.<sup>15</sup> The composition is in four voices. The structure of the music is determined by the text with main cadences at the end of the second and fourth lines of each stanza. These create a pseudo-phrygian modality which contributes to the work's Spanish character.

Daza's three *sonetos* are all settings of Spanish sonnets. Although settings by the vihuelistas do not fall into any regular pattern, the poetic form usually underlies the musical structure. Daza's *sonetos* stylistically owe much to the Italian madrigal. His work *Ay mudo soy*<sup>16</sup> is an arrangement of a vocal piece no longer extant by Pedro Ordóñez. Its text is anonymous. As poetry, the sonnet is not particularly notable, but lends itself well to

<sup>14</sup> This work is one of the very few by Daza which has been recorded. It is available, performed by Victoria de los Angeles, on the disc *Spanish Song of the Renaissance* HMV-ALP1883 (now deleted).

<sup>15</sup> J. B. Trend, *Luis Milan and the Vihuelistas*, Hispanic Notes and Monographs XI (London, 1925), p. 55.



b) bars 18-26

dices me que no te ha ble mas he mie do  
Di - ces me que no te ha - ble; mas he mie - do

en tan grande si - len - ci - o ser per - di - do  
en tan gran - de si - len - ci - o ser per - di - do

This section contains guitar tablature at the top and bottom, and vocal lines in the middle. The guitar part includes fret numbers and chord diagrams. The vocal lines are in a single system with lyrics in Spanish. The music is in a minor key and features a mix of eighth and quarter notes.

c) bars 54 ff.

manda oir pues que muero por querer te. ii. que muero  
man - da o - ir pues que mue - ro por que - rer - te, que mue - ro por que - rer - te, que muero

por querer te  
por que - rer - te.

This section contains guitar tablature at the top and bottom, and vocal lines in the middle. The guitar part includes fret numbers and chord diagrams. The vocal lines are in a single system with lyrics in Spanish. The music is in a minor key and features a mix of eighth and quarter notes. The section ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.



eral types of imitation, but all operate within a generally homophonic texture and unified rhythmic structure. Example 7 shows a fragment of the work.

The *Villancico* was the song form afforded the most space by Daza. Two styles of *villancico* setting are found in *El Parnaso*; the old popular type and that of the cultivated courtly style. The first, that of a clearly articulated form, is usually just a setting of the popular themes pertaining to the particular *villancico*. The more cultivated sixteenth-century setting often relied on popular themes for its foundation, but worked them into a more homogeneous fabric of seemingly through composed imitative polyphony. *Gritos daua la Morenica* is one of the popular *villancicos* in *El Parnaso*. It is a simple and delightful example of characteristically Spanish song. The entire musical setting in four voices is based on two themes which are given in the *estribillo*. The first repeat of the *estribillo* has a thickened texture and concludes with a number of syncopated imitations of the second theme bodily presented. The structures of the text and music can be placed against each other thus:

	estribillo				Copla				estribillo
	A		B		c		c		B
Text					┌	┐	┌	┐	
					c	c	c	a	
Music	X	Y	X	Y	x <sup>1</sup>	x <sup>1</sup>	X		Y <sup>1</sup>

The three-voice *villancico*, *A tierras ajenas*, represents the second style mentioned above. Like the previous piece, it is not attributed to any composer and therefore is likely to be based on a popular melody. Two vocal settings of the same text survive<sup>20</sup> and show melodic similarity. Two possibilities as to the origin of Daza's version exist. Either he made his own version based upon the pre-existing melodies or arranged another vocal version which no longer survives. The composition suggests the latter by the vocal character of its lines and John Ward in his dissertation projects the likely style of the supposedly lost model.<sup>21</sup> Its style also suggests that it was written considerably later than the version by Penalosa. This latter version is of the same type as the first *villancico* discussed. Daza's version of *A tierras ajenas* has a greater amount of harmonic variety and a more melismatic setting of the text than the Penalosa version placing more emphasis on the emotional expression of the sentiments conveyed through the text. Two main melodic cells provide cohesion in Daza's version. They are most significant at points of structural division of the text. These themes are also found in Penalosa's version. Examples 8(a) and (b) show the style of each *villancico*.

Since the rediscovery of the vihuela and its repertoire in the closing

<sup>20</sup> One version, by Penalosa, is found in *La Musica en la Corte de los Reyes Catolicos*, ed. Angles, Monumentos de la Musica Espanola, I, V. X (Barcelona, 1941), No. 362. The other is No. 22 in the *Cancionero de Upsala*, ed. R. Mitjana and J. Bal y Gay (Mexico City, 1944).

<sup>21</sup> Ward, Example 10.

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Example 8 a): *Gritos daua la morenica* (bars 1-7)

Gri tos da ua la mo re ni ca so el o li bar  
 Gri - tos da - ua la mo - re - ni - ca so el o - li - bar,

que las ra mas ha ze tem blar  
 que las ra - mas ha - ze tem - blar.

*Vihuela in A*

b): *A tierras agenas*, bars 8-13

ii.

A tier ras a ge nas ¿quién me  
 tru jo a e llas?

*Vihuela in A*

years of last century, both performance and scholarship have gradually been gaining momentum, and now about half of the repertoire has been transcribed, edited and republished. Perhaps the least discussed part of the repertoire has been *El Parnaso*. It is clear from an examination of the book, or even the fragments transcribed here, that it is valuable music and worthy of a place in historical vihuela performance—a field which itself lags sadly behind that of its kindred instruments.

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