




COMMUNICATION: REPORT

## Dubourg, Geminiani and the Violin Concerto in D Major: A Misattribution

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Matthew Dubourg (1703–1767) is today mostly remembered as the virtuoso violinist who led the band of musicians for the premiere of Handel's oratorio *Messiah* in Dublin in April 1742. He was a child prodigy – contemporary reports reveal that he was performing publicly at the age of eleven – and pupil of Francesco Geminiani (1687–1762), with whom he maintained a lifelong friendship. In 1728 Dubourg was made Master of the State Musick in Ireland following the death of Johann Sigismund Cousser (1660–1727), who had held the position since 1716. Geminiani, who had first been offered the position, declined it on account of being a Roman Catholic (other theories for Geminiani's refusal are advanced in Enrico Careri, *Francesco Geminiani (1687–1762)* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 21). Dubourg's position as Master required him to compose odes to celebrate the birthdays of the British monarchs in Dublin. Surviving poetry, newspaper reports and music suggest that he composed an unbroken series of two odes per year until his death. Dubourg's other compositions survive in various eighteenth-century manuscripts and publications. These include dances – minuets, jigs and 'Dubourg's Maggott', for instance – some songs and his 'graces' for Corelli's Op. 5 violin sonatas (on the last see Neal Zaslaw, 'Ornaments for Corelli's Violin Sonatas, Op. 5', *Early Music* 24/1 (1996), 95–116, and Robert E. Seletsky, '18th-Century Variations for Corelli's Sonatas, Op. 5', *Early Music* 24/1 (1996), 119–130). Dubourg's most popular work was undoubtedly his variations on the traditional Irish song 'Eibhlín a Rún', first published for harpsichord in 1746 (*Select Minuets, collected from the Castle Balls, and the Publick Assemblies in Dublin. Composed by the best Masters. . . to which is added Eleena Roon by Mr. Dubourgh, set to the Harpsichord with his Variations* (Dublin: William Mainwaring), held at The National Library of Ireland, Dublin (IRL-Dn), Add. Mus. 9013). This publication was advertised in *The Dublin Journal* for 27–30 December 1746.

Despite this substantial compositional output, Dubourg is not well known as a composer. Somewhat addressing this neglect is a recording by the Irish Baroque Orchestra, which mostly features works composed by Dubourg. This album – 'Welcome Home, Mr Dubourg' (Linn CKD 532, 2019) – was reviewed by David Rhodes (*Eighteenth-Century Music* 17/2 (2020), 281–285), who provided a thorough and thoughtful account of its contents, the merit of their inclusion and their context in relation to what we know of Dubourg's life and career. Unsurprisingly, it includes Dubourg's variations on 'Eibhlín a Rún' and Corelli's Violin Sonata in A major Op. 5 No. 9 with Dubourg's graces. The recording features excerpts from the birthday odes for Dublin Castle as well as the ode for George II's birthday in 1739 in its entirety. Much of the music is not extant, but the autograph manuscripts for this ode and the excerpts included on the recording are held at the Royal College of Music in London (GB-Lcm 847, 848, 849 and 850). The order of the movements as they are bound across these four volumes is haphazard, and further complicated by the composer's reuse of movements or 'self-borrowing'; much work remains to be done to identify and date the ode movements

for their inclusion in a catalogue of Dubourg's works (Estelle Murphy, *The Works of Matthew Dubourg: A Thematic Catalogue* (forthcoming)).

The exact provenance of these autograph manuscripts, as Rhodes has noted, is unknown. Burney states 'the odes which [Dubourg] set for Ireland, and innumerable solos [sonatas] and concertos which he composed for his own public performance, are now in the possession of one of his disciples, and of some of them the composition is excellent' (Charles Burney, *A General History of Music From the Earliest Ages to the Present Period*, four volumes, volume 4 (London: author, 1789), 651). While none of these 'solos and concertos' appear in the volumes held at the Royal College of Music, a solo violin concerto in D major attributed to Dubourg in another manuscript source is included on the Irish Baroque Orchestra recording. As noted by Rhodes, the Irish Baroque Orchestra's does not represent the first modern performance of the concerto, for it received its premiere in March 2014 as part of the RISM concert 'An Evening of Irish Music', when it was also attributed to Dubourg (see <https://rism.info/events/2014/02/24/an-evening-of-irish-music.html> and [https://rism.info/rism\\_a\\_z/2014/09/15/matthew-dubourg.html](https://rism.info/rism_a_z/2014/09/15/matthew-dubourg.html)).

The manuscript source for this solo concerto is held at the Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Dresden (D-DI Mus. 2962-O-1). It is a set of five parts: 'Violino Primo Concertino', 'Violino Primo Rippieno [*sic*]', 'Violino Secondo', 'Viola' and 'Basso Continuo' (no figures). The 'Violino Primo Concertino' part bears the attribution 'Sig<sup>re</sup> Dubour', which is presumably the reason it has long been thought to be Dubourg's work. It is in the hand of a copyist identified as 'S-DI-062' (<https://opac.rism.info/search?id=pe30097534&View=rism>). This same copyist wrote one other manuscript, also held in Dresden: Geminiani's Concerto in D major Op. 3 No. 1 (D-DI, Mus. 2201-O-4.) The paper used for both works is the same, bearing a watermark of a Strasbourg Lily with the letters LVG underneath and countermark 'IV'. This watermark is listed as C20 by Donald Burrows and Martha J. Ronish in *A Catalogue of Handel's Musical Autographs* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 288). They identify the paper as English, dating it to the early 1730s at the latest, which means that both manuscripts were probably copied in England around this time. (My thanks to Donald Burrows for this information (private correspondence January 2023), and also to Rudolf Rasch (private correspondence, December 2022) for sharing information that will appear in his forthcoming critical edition of Francesco Geminiani, *Concertos Op. 3 (1732–1733; revised 1751)*, Opera Omnia, volume 3A (Bologna: Ut Orpheus, 2023).)

It has now come to light, however, that the 'Dubourg' concerto was in fact composed by Francesco Geminiani. It appears in John Walsh's 1734 publication *Select Harmony, Third Collection: Six Concertos in Seven Parts for Violins, and other Instruments*, where it is presented as a concerto grosso. It is the third work in the publication, attributed to Geminiani ('Geminiani no. 2') at the bottom of the first page of each of its parts. Of the six concertos contained in *Select Harmony*, three are by Geminiani, one is by Giacomo Facco (1676–1753) and two are anonymous. Geminiani's three works were included in a critical edition edited by Christopher Hogwood in 2010 (*6 Concertos after Corelli, Opp. 1 & 3, H. 126–131; 3 Concertos from 'Select Harmony', H. 121–123; 2 Unison Concertos, H. 124–125*, Opera Omnia, volume 8 (Bologna: Ut Orpheus)). The 'Dubourg' manuscript is not included among the sources used, presumably as it was unknown to the editor at the time; Hogwood draws exclusively from Walsh's surviving issues of *Select Harmony* for this concerto (the surviving copies of *Select Harmony* are discussed in detail by Rudolf Rasch in *The Thirty-One Works of Francesco Geminiani: Thematic Catalogue*, <https://geminiani.sites.uu.nl>). The critical edition was reviewed by Alberto Sanna, who noted that the three concertos from *Select Harmony* make it clear that 'Geminiani's own works are doubtless the more interesting objects of study and performance [compared to Geminiani's adaptations of Corelli's trios]' (*Eighteenth-Century Music* 9/1 (2012), 140).

A primary difference between the concerto as it appears in the 'Dubourg' manuscript and in *Select Harmony* is that it has been expanded to seven parts and reworked as a concerto grosso for the publication (for further description of the parts and the differences between the manuscript

and published sources see my ‘Matthew Dubourg’s Violin Concerto: A Case of Mistaken Identity’, *Handel Institute Newsletter* 34/1 (2023), 10–13). The two newly added parts are labelled ‘Violino Secondo Concertino’ and ‘Violoncello’. The ‘Violoncello’ part in *Select Harmony* matches the basso continuo part of the manuscript, with both being unfigured; the figured basso continuo in *Select Harmony* has no match in the manuscript. The differences in musical content are mostly insignificant, apart from four bars (106–109) in the final episode of the Allegro second movement. In the manuscript the ‘Violino Primo’ has double stops, while the equivalent bars in *Select Harmony* maintain the semiquaver sequences established in the preceding passage.

The absence of a ‘Violino Secondo Concertino’ part in the Dresden manuscript makes it a somewhat defective source, for it is needed in some passages in the third and fourth movements. Rasch asserts that the Dresden manuscript therefore seems to be a ‘derived’ version (Rasch, *The Thirty-One Works of Francesco Geminiani: Thematic Catalogue*, ‘Work Six: The *Select Harmony* Concertos (1734)’, 19, <https://geminiani.sites.uu.nl>), and suggests that it may be based on a copy made by Dubourg. He also theorizes that the Dresden manuscript could have been copied from a now lost transcription of the concerto made by Henry Needler (1685–1760) in 1721, and referred to in a letter from John Perceval (1683–1750, First Earl of Egmont from 1733, residing mostly in London) to his brother Philip Perceval (dates unknown, residing mostly in Dublin). Although this is hypothetical, we know that both Philip Perceval and Needler were in contact with Dubourg in the late 1710s (Ellen T. Harris, ‘Music Distribution in London during Handel’s Lifetime: Manuscript Copies versus Prints’, in *Music in Print and Beyond: Hildegard von Bingen to The Beatles*, ed. Craig A. Monson and Roberta Montemorra Marvin (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), 99 and 111–112).

Although this concerto was not composed by Dubourg, the presence of his name on the manuscript source makes it probable that he performed it. It is therefore quite possible that the double-stopped passage found there, absent from the *Select Harmony* version, represents the way Dubourg performed it. If it is the case that the manuscript source is derived from *Select Harmony*, as Rasch has postulated, then the double stops show an attempt by Dubourg to make this movement of the concerto more virtuosic. Equally, if the *Select Harmony* version was derived from the manuscript source (or a version of it), this may indicate that Walsh as publisher (or indeed Geminiani) considered the double stops to be too difficult for the intended purchaser. Nevertheless, the ‘Violino Primo Concertino’ part remains a challenging one for the player, even with that passage removed.

While it is satisfying to rectify the confusion about the authorship of this concerto, it is also unfortunate, for it means that all of Dubourg’s concertos remain fugitive. One can only hope that these will come to light through future research, a hope that is kept alive in Burney’s mention of their existence in the possession of Dubourg’s ‘disciples’, together with his odes and ‘solos’.

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