

# Dominika Stopczańska

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ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY IN POZNAŃ

## **Functions of Scordatura on the Example of Selected Compositions from the Collection of St Anne's Church on Piasek Island in Wrocław's Chapel (1679–1686)**

### **Abstract**

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Scordatura is a tuning of a string instrument, which is different than the standard one. It has been used for both plucked and string instruments since the 16th century and it was quite popular in the Baroque era, especially in the case of violins. Because of their specific tuning—based on the same intervals—it is possible to distinguish two types of violin scordatura. The first one relates to the situation when all strings are tuned up or down in the same interval relations. Such tuning is still based on fifths, but the pitches are different than using standard tuning, so it is called transpose scordatura. In the second one, each string is tuned up or down in different interval relation, in another direction or even only some of them are tuned in the unusual way. In this case, violin tuning is based on different intervals

than fifths, usually on thirds and/or fourths, although sometimes there are three dissimilar intervals (thirds, fourths and fifths). The second type of scordatura was a very popular technique in the Baroque era and its functions were variable. The main of them were allowing to perform figures, which are impossible in standard tuning, especially double-notes and chords (technical aspect), and changing sound qualities of the instrument (sound aspect). It does not mean that scordatura was used only to achieve these goals. For example, it was sometimes used to imitate other instrument. There are certain examples of such a usage of this playing technique in the oldest (1679–1686) part of the collection of manuscripts connected with activity of Canonesses Regular of St Augustine in Wrocław (provenance St Anna in Arena). The scordatura can be found there in seven manuscripts, and in four of them it is possible that composers (or composer?) tried to assimilate the violin sound and/or technique with other instruments, such as viola, lute or trumpet.

## Keywords

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scordatura, violin technique, 17th-century music, performance practice, Canonesses Regular of St Augustine in Wrocław, vocal-instrumental chapel

## Definition of scordatura and ways of its realisation

Scordatura is defined as a technique of playing consisting in tuning the instrument in a different way than commonly accepted.<sup>1</sup> The use of this technique can be found in the performance practice of almost all stringed instruments, as well as many plucked string instruments.<sup>2</sup> A necessary condition to speak about the scordatura is the existence of a standard, commonly used tuning of a given instrument in a given period.<sup>3</sup> The violin gained this quality in the first half of the 16th

<sup>1</sup> T. Russel, *The Violin "Scordatura"*, [in:] "The Musical Quarterly" 24 (1938), No. 1, p. 84; D.D. Boyden et al., *Scordatura*, [in:] *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, S. Sadie (ed.), Vol. 22, London 2001, p. 891.

<sup>2</sup> D.D. Boyden et al., *op. cit.*, p. 893.

<sup>3</sup> In the case of instrument, which only have the most common tuning, all exception to it should be rather called as variants.

century.<sup>4</sup> The tuning characteristic for it, based on three consecutive perfect fifths, starting from *g*, is valid until today. Its specificity, consisting in the use of the same intervals, causes that the definition of scordatura presented above can be related to two different ways of tuning this instrument. The first one is characterised by intervals that are other than the standard fifth constituting the basis of the violin's tuning. This effect can be obtained either by re-tuning all the strings for different intervals, in a different direction, or by re-tuning only some of them. In the second method fifths are kept; however, they are counted from another sound. This is achieved by re-tuning all the strings by the same interval in the same direction (transposing scordatura).<sup>5</sup> In the 17-century works rather the use of the first type of scordatura was characteristic<sup>6</sup> and in the further course of this article the term scordatura will be used only in this sense (unless it is clearly indicated that this is a transposing scordatura). Even if it would be presumed that the construction of the violin limits the possibility of manipulating individual strings only to a fourth,<sup>7</sup> the number of possible combinations will turn out to be significant. On the basis of sources, however, it is possible to find two the most characteristic types of scordatura. The first of them was limited to the tuning one or two strings up or down by a second. As a rule, this concerned the extreme strings, especially *e*<sup>2</sup> changed into *d*<sup>2</sup>, and *g* into *a*, although it was also possible to change the tune of one of the middle strings. The second frequently occurring type of scordatura consisted of re-tuning two or three strings in such a way as to obtain a full triad, e.g. *a*, *e*<sup>1</sup>, *a*<sup>1</sup>, *cis*<sup>2</sup> or *c*<sup>1</sup>, *f*<sup>1</sup>, *a*<sup>1</sup>, *c*<sup>2</sup>. These tendencies are easily connected with the most frequently mentioned functions of scordatura cited in the literature.

<sup>4</sup> D.D. Boyden, *Dzieje gry skrzypcowej od początków do roku 1761 oraz jej związek ze skrzypcami i muzyką skrzypcową*, trans. into Polish by H. Duńczyk-Niwińska, E. Gabryś, Kraków 1980, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> D. Glüxam, *Die Violinskordatur und ihre Rolle in der Geschichte des Violinspiels. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Quellen der erzbischöflichen Musiksammlung in Kremsier*, Tutzing 1999, pp. 53–54.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> It would be inconsistent with the most frequently used tunings; compare: D. Glüxam, *op. cit.*, pp. 426–430.

## Functions of scordatura in music of the 17th century

Starting with Theodor Russel's text,<sup>8</sup> written in 1937, three basic functions of scordatura can be found in literature:

1. making it easier, or even possible to perform some figures;
2. broadening the scale of an instrument downwards through re-tuning the lowest string;<sup>9</sup>
3. a change of the instrument's timbre.

Taking into account the fact that extending the scale of the instrument means in practice that some unattainable figures in a standard tuning can be performed, the above typology can be reduced to two fundamental aspects: technical and sonic.

The technical aspect is obviously related to the natural possibilities of the violin, which are manifested in its idiom. The instrumental idiom should be defined as a way of shaping a part so that it is not only possible, but also consciously adapted<sup>10</sup> or definitely easier to perform when playing the given instrument.<sup>11</sup> It consists of a number of different elements, ranging from the scale, through the sound qualities, to the much more detailed features, for example related to the application or the characteristic shape of the melody and multiple stops. From the perspective of the discussed issue, the last group of elements will be important. The following manifestations of the violin idiom can be included in it:

- wide register, both in the general sense and with respect to the possibilities of individual strings (relatively large intervals between them); thanks to this, the ability to perform melodies based on a wide ambitus without the need for frequent changes of strings and positions, also in fast tempos is characteristic for the violin,

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<sup>8</sup> T. Russel, *op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> It should be noticed here that in the 17th-century music it was probably used rather rarely—Dagmar Glüxam gives only one example from this period, where the lowest string is tuned down by a second—in the manuscript of the Johann Heinrich Schmelzer's trio sonata, kept in the archive of the Archbishop's Palace in Kroměříž, cat. No. A 639 (RISM ID: 550264664); *Vide*: D. Glüxam, *op. cit.*, p. 430.

<sup>10</sup> D.D. Boyden, *Dzieje...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 141–142.

<sup>11</sup> Compare: P. Wilk, *Sonata na skrzypce solo w siedemnastowiecznych Włoszech*, Wrocław 2005, pp. 144–146.

- sixths as the most characteristic double stops, opposite to, for example, longer passages of thirds (requiring more frequent change of position); also the great ease of performing parallel fifths (with the same finger on adjacent strings), which, however, is incompatible with the stylistics of the 17-century music, practically do not appear in the repertoire,
- ease of performing chords in a wide-ranging system, unlike chords in a focused system (only some are possible to implement, e.g. A major and A minor played:  $c^1 / cis^1, e^1, a^1$  or other systems using empty strings).

The technical aspect of scordatura should be considered when taking the abovementioned features into account. In practice, it means that such tuning of the instrument that non-idiomatic (very difficult or impossible to perform) figures become feasible while maintaining an idiomatic system of the left hand. This in particular will concern the multiple stops. An example of such an operation may be using the chord in D minor in the system:  $f^1, a^1, d^2$ , which in a standard tuning is very difficult to perform, while in the  $c^1, f^1, a^1, c^2$  tuning it requires shortening the strings as in the case of D major in the system:  $d^1, a^1, fis^2$  (only the first finger on the highest string). It will be similar in the case of the passages of thirds—in the standard tuning they provoke the necessity to change the position frequently, while in the tuning in which a third is used between adjacent strings, they can be made only in the first position by shortening the strings in the same place. On the other hand, in such case it becomes much more difficult to implement idiomatic figures for a standard tuning, such as sixths or even octaves. When considering the fact that most types of tunings used in the 17th century—due to the use of intervals wider than fifths between adjacent strings—not only narrow the scale of the instrument, but also ease the performance of large skips and wide melodies, it turns out that scordatura does not really expand, but rather modifies the violin's possibilities resulting from their tuning.

The sound aspect is definitely a less homogeneous category and concerns a range of different phenomena. The most obvious ones are related to the change in the arrangement of empty strings. Due to the fact that they are not shortened in any way, their sound is the strongest and the most resonant. Since the scordatura, by definition, affects this

element, the sound aspect understood in this way occurs every time when this method is applied, although to a different extent depending on the tuning used. What is connected with the distribution of empty strings is also another issue, which can be described as the natural tonality of the violin. The standard tuning of empty strings ( $g$ ,  $d^1$ ,  $a^1$ ,  $e^2$ ) provides the best effects in the key of G major and D major, and to a slightly lesser extent in the parallel minor keys and in the key of A major.<sup>12</sup> This is related not only to the general convenience of the play, resulting from the natural layout of the left hand, but also with the sound. For the key of G major all the sounds played on empty strings are significant in terms of tonality:  $g$  corresponds to the root of a tonic,  $d^1$ —a root of a dominant,  $a^1$ —a root of a dominant, and  $e^2$ —a fifth of a dominant. Similarly, in the key of D major, for which  $g$  is a root of a subdominant,  $d^1$ —a root of a tonic,  $a^1$ —a root of a dominant,  $e^2$ —a fifth of a dominant. Such a close relationship does not exist in the case of other keys, such as F major or E flat major, which largely affects the sound, because it forces the player to resign from the strongest sonic sounds. In the context of popular fourth-third scordaturas, the so-understood aspect of the sound will be manifested either in adjusting the tuning to the tonality, which is unusual for the violin, or emphasizing a specific harmonic chord of a specific key (such as  $c^1$ ,  $f^1$ ,  $a^1$ ,  $c^2$  based on a tonic of F major).

The last manifestation of the relationship between scordatura and the sound of the violin mentioned in the literature has a completely different character. It is called “making the violin similar to other instruments”.<sup>13</sup> An example illustrating such a procedure may be the use of fourth-third tunings in order to imitate the characteristic bugle-like parts of the trumpets using only empty strings.<sup>14</sup> Such parts were sometimes called by the name of the imitated instrument,<sup>15</sup> but this practice was not common. As a consequence, the identification of such a function of scordatura is not always obvious. This is especially true if the analysis of a given part shows that the lack of scordatura

<sup>12</sup> D. Glüxam, *op. cit.*, pp. 63–64.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66–72.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, It should be underlined that the imitating the sound of trumpets when playing the violin is the phenomenon, which exist not only in connection with scordatura (*vide*: P. Wilk, *op. cit.*, pp. 156–157). This remark can be also referring to other cases of sound imitation.

<sup>15</sup> D. Glüxam, *op. cit.*, pp. 67–68.

would make the performance impossible. Then it may seem that this technical aspect (definitely easier to see, even with a quick analysis) was crucial to use scordatura.

However, this statement requires two reservations. First of all, none of the above-mentioned aspects of the use of the scordatura will ever be its only function. Even if the composer decided to use it primarily to enable to perform certain figures, due to the change in the arrangement of empty strings, the influence on the sound will always be present. Secondly, the question should be asked whether it is fully justified to classify the imitation of other instruments by the violin only to the sonic aspect. Annette Otterstedt in her study on the history of viola mentioned that the Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber's frequent use of fourth-third scordatura could be related to the fact that the composer was above all a violist, and began to play the violin only later.<sup>16</sup> Such a procedure could, therefore, aimed at changing the characteristics of the violin technique to those typical of viola; however, the researcher did not develop this topic.

With such an interpretation, it should be assumed that imitating other instruments through the use of scordatura may be manifested both on the sonic and technical level. This issue is even more interesting because it is actually omitted in literature. Meanwhile, it can be observed in some of the works preserved in the collections of the church of St Anna on Piasek Island in Wrocław.

### **Scordatura in the compositions from the collection of the St Anna's Church on Piasek Island**

Collections from the church of St Anna on Piasek Island are associated with the activities of Canonesses Regular of St Augustine in Wrocław.<sup>17</sup> It is known that until 1687 they used this small church, which also served as a cemetery chapel, and since the 1760s there was a vocal-instrumental ensemble at the monastery.<sup>18</sup> The oldest

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<sup>16</sup> A. Otterstedt, *The Viol: History of an Instrument*, trans. into Polish by H. Reiners, Kassel 2002, p. 71.

<sup>17</sup> H. Hoffmann, *Sandstift und Pfarrkirche St. Maria in Breslau*, Stuttgart–Aalen 1971, p. 60.

<sup>18</sup> T. Jeż, *Wstęp*, [in:] G. Braun, *In Nomine Jesu, O caelitum Dux*, T. Jeż (ed.), Warszawa 2017, p. 7.

manuscripts associated with the chapel's activity have the provenance notes of "Chori S. Annae" and the annual date, in some cases also daily. Unfortunately, most authors of the works are unknown. This collection, which includes more than one hundred manuscripts currently stored at the University Library in Warsaw, is characterized by the dominance of vocal-instrumental works with German and Latin texts. These are mainly religious songs (the development of psalms and texts from other sources, sometimes of unknown origin). A small part of the collection are masses, litanies and other larger compositions (including *Te Deum*). Purely instrumental works can be found only in three manuscripts.<sup>19</sup> In the context of such a characteristics of the collection, it may be surprising that scordatura appears there, as it is rather associated with instrumental music, especially intended for solo violin. In fact, however, the technique was used in 17-century vocal-instrumental compositions, often related to the desire to express the meaning of the text by changing the timbre.<sup>20</sup>

From the perspective of the issue discussed in this text, the more important is the fact that in the case of compositions from collections from the St Anna's Church on Piasek Island the use of scordatura is also strongly associated with the technical aspect. It results from the domination of the chain form, in which the fragments for solo voice are interlarded with purely instrumental sonatas, sonatelles or ritornellos. As a consequence, a large number of works intended in fact for a solo string instrument can be found here. Significantly, these are not just violins. This is important because it allows to determine what instruments were known in this centre and what was the local specificity of their performance practice, and, consequently, what instruments and how they could be imitated by the violin. In this context, particular attention is paid to the frequent use of the bass viola da gamba, also in the aforementioned "solo" compositions.<sup>21</sup> Repeated ornamentations

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<sup>19</sup> Anonim, *Dwie sonaty triowe*, cat. No. RM 5617, RISM ID: 300510707, 1682 r.; Johann Heinrich Schmeltzer, *Sonata a 6*, cat. No. RM 4926, RISM ID: 300510706, 1682 r.; Schmeltzer (?), *Sonata de Nativitate a 8*, cat. No. RM 4926, RISM ID: 300510705. Data based on RISM database: [www.rism.info](http://www.rism.info) [accessed: 20.06.2018].

<sup>20</sup> D. Glüxam, *op. cit.*, pp. 100–118.

<sup>21</sup> Anonymous, *Ave Regina*, cat. No. RM 6353, RISM ID: 300510765, 1680 r.; Anonymous, *Begrüßt seist du Mutter*, cat. No. RM 6533, RISM ID: 300510839, 1681. Together the violin viola da gamba appears among others in the following compositions: Carolus Rabovius, *Domine Jesu Christe*, cat. No. RM 6289, RISM



appear frequently in them; however, it is interesting that chords are quite rare.<sup>22</sup> Only one composition is written for violetta solo,<sup>23</sup> and it is extremely difficult to identify what instrument was in fact used for performing it.<sup>24</sup> In some works, short fragments in which the trumpets play an independent role can be also found.<sup>25</sup>

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ID: 300510752, 1680; Anonymous, *Amo te Deum meum*, cat. No. RM 6338, RISM ID: 300510758, 1680 (viola da gamba *de facto* realises basso figurato, extended in comparison to the organo part as it has numerous ornamentations); Anonymous, *O grande Misterium*, cat. No. RM 6445, RISM ID: 300510803, 1681; Anonymous, *Deus Meus*, cat. No. RM 6386, RISM ID: 300510780, 1681; Anonymous, *O salutaris hostia*, cat. No. RM 6455, RISM ID: 300510808, 1681.

<sup>22</sup> In the solo compositions there are rare. They are usually double stops highlighting the downbeats (e.g. in the manuscript RM 6533). Definitely more extended chord texture appears in the compositions or their fragments, where viola da gamba realizes the part of basso continuo, so it loses the function of a solo instrument (e.g. fragments of anonymous *O Salutaris hostia* from the manuscript RM 6455, where viola does not have the function of the melodic instrument, or the anonymous *Alles kunden sing muss* cat. No. RM 6504, where gamba ornaments the part of basso continuo through simple figurations and double stops).

<sup>23</sup> Anonymous, *Sub tuum praesidium*, sygn. RM 6653, RISM ID: 300510858, 1680.

<sup>24</sup> The term is unclear—in different place and time it could mean the violin, viola, and viola da gamba (*vide*: H.M. Brown, S. Bonta, *Violetta*, [in:] *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, S. Sadie (ed.), Vol. 26, London 2001, p. 701). Certain considerations on the topic of this term can be found in: Charles Brewer, *The Instrumental Music of Schmelzter, Biber, Muffat and Their Contemporaries*, Bodmin 2011, pp. 143–144) and Marc Strümper, *Viola da Gamba am Wiener Kaiserhof. Untersuchungen zur Instrumenten- und Werkgeschichte der Wiener Hofmusikkapelle im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, Tutzing 2004, pp. 106–107). It is also mentioned by David D. Boyden, but only in the context of the ambiguity of the names for string instruments in the 16th and 17th centuries (*vide: idem, Dzieje...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 23, 39, 41–42, 45). The only attempt to discuss the issue in the complex way was made by John Catch (*vide: idem, No, Not Anyone's Violetta*, “Chelys: The Journal of the Viola da Gamba Society” 23 (1994), pp. 89–90), the statements written there should be clarified and broadly analysed.

<sup>25</sup> Among others Schmelzter (?), *Sonata a 8*, Cat. No. RM 4926, RISM ID: 300510705; fragments also appear in more extended compositions, e.g. Anonymous, *Te Deum laudamus*, cat. No. RM 5480, RISM ID: 300510717, 1682.

Title	Author	Cat. No. of a manuscript	RISM ID
Collection of sacred songs in German	Anonymous	RM 6577	300510848
<i>Respice Mater filios</i>	Anonymous	RM 6641	300510855
<i>Satis est Domine</i>	Anonymous	RM 6651	300510856
<i>Surge et illuminare Jerusalem</i>	Anonymous	RM 6654	300510859
<i>Te Deum Laudamus</i> (fragment)	Anonymous	RM 5482	300514246
<i>Ave virgo quae origo</i>	Kučera	RM 6231	300510735
<i>O mi Jesu, o mi Amor</i>	Anonymous	RM 6450	300510806
<i>Süßed Kind der Gotter</i>	Anonymous	RM 6594	300510852

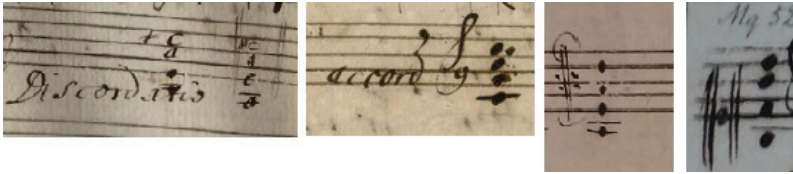
Table 1: Compositions using scordatura in the collections from the St Anna's Church on Piasek Island in Wrocław.

Compositions from the collections from the St Anna's Church on Piasek Island, in which the scordatura was used, are mentioned in table 1. No other copies of these compositions are known.<sup>26</sup> At this point it should be noted that the list presented above contains only examples of works in which a typical scordatura was used. Meanwhile, in the collections of the St Anna's Church on Piasek Island, there are also at least three manuscripts, in which there is most likely a transposing scordatura: RM 6577 (anonymous collection of religious songs from 1679), RM 6464 (Anonymous, *Pati pro Christo quam dulce est* from 1680) and RM 6676 (Anonymous, *Sonata* [?] from 1680).

The fact of using this technique, which is unusual for 17th-century music, is extremely interesting and therefore worth a more extensive discussion, but this is not the case in this work. Therefore, further

<sup>26</sup> In one example, however, the similarity to the other composition is striking. Namely, it is the manuscript RM 6577. Here, there is the similarity between the first bar of *Sonata I* and the theme motif of the first part of *Sonata III* from the collection *Sonatae tam aris quam aulis servientes* written by Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber. The only difference between these fragments is the key in the manuscript RM 6577 it is D major, and Biber's composition is in g minor. However, the interval structure and rhythm are identical, so it is possible that the author of *Sonata I* was inspired to some extent by Biber's work.

analyses will concern only selected works using a typical scordatura. It should be noted that in some cases the definition of the function of scordatura is relatively easy: it serves to adapt the violin's abilities to the keys, which are unusual for the instrument, as in *Sonatas II* and *III* and the songs *Wer Zungen hat* and *O milde Jungfrau* from the manuscript RM 6577. In a part of the works, however, this is not so obvious. In others, despite the seemingly obvious function of the scordatura, usually associated with the key, certain fragments appear, which may be considered as an attempt to imitate other instruments. It is these compositions—either entirely featuring the imitation of the sound of other instruments or with some fragments of interest from this perspective—will be discussed later in the article. In all of these examples, the use of scordatura has been indicated by the occurrence of appropriate notes in manuscripts, either at the beginning of the part (in the case of the manuscript No. RM 6594) or at the end (in other cases). This is illustrated in example 1.



Ex. 1: Scordatura's notes in the manuscripts (from the left): PL-Wu RM 6641, 6654, 6450, 6594.

### **Anonymous, *Respice Mater filios*, cat. No. RM 6641, 1680.**

The manuscript RM 6641 contains one composition intended for two voices—*Violino* and *Canto*—with the accompaniment of basso continuo (*Organo*). It is the Latin song *Respice Mater filios*. It is maintained in the aforementioned chain form, in which fragments intended for vocal voice are interlarded with instrumental sonatas. Here, scordatura  $a, e^{\sharp}, a^{\sharp}, cis^{\sharp}$  was used. This tuning is characteristic for keys with sharps, in particular A major and E flat major, constituting the harmonic basis of the whole composition. Here, the manifestation of the technical aspect in the application of the scordatura can be seen, related to

the adaptation of the instrument to its unusual tonality. This aspect is also noticeable on other levels. Even the first bars contain figures impossible to perform in a standard tuning, such as the quadruple stop A major in the arrangement:  $a, e^1, a^1, cis^2$  and the chord E flat major:  $e^1, gis^1, h^1$  (see example 2). In the further course of the song, they appear many times.



Violino  
(original notation)

Violino  
(transposed to the standard tuning)

Two musical staves are shown. The top staff is labeled 'Violino (original notation)' and shows a series of chords in a non-standard tuning. The bottom staff is labeled 'Violino (transposed to the standard tuning)' and shows the same chords transposed to standard tuning.

Ex. 2: Anonymous, *Respice Mater filios*, cat. No. RM 6641, the part of *Violino* (original with scordatura and transposition to the standard tuning), bb. 1–3.

Also other structures found in the *Respice Mater filios* would be impossible or very difficult to perform in a standard tuning, if only due to the necessity of frequent changes of position and use of half-position. It might seem that this technical aspect decided to use the changed tuning in this piece. The texture, however, suggests another possible explanation. Well, in almost the entire voice of *Violino* there are multiple stops, with the dominance of triple and quadruple stops. Of course, at a time when the discussed manuscript was written, this technique was widely used. However, like any other technical aspect of playing this instrument, it was associated with its idiom. In this case, it concerns both the left hand—as already described—and the right hand. Due to their construction, the violin is primarily a melodic instrument. Its arched stand causes that the individual strings are

so separated from each other that it is possible to make only single sounds or double stops fluently. Most of the triple and quadruple stops, however, require a “break”, i.e. performing separately, first one or two lower notes, and then, using a specific arpeggio, higher notes (see example 3).



Ex. 3: The quadruple stop written and the effect that is possible to achieve when playing the violin.

The slightly milder arc of the 17th-century stand and the different structure of the bow during this period could have caused some of the three sounds to be played “together”, especially when better resonating empty strings were used. Nevertheless, it seems that in many cases the “breaking” of chords was still necessary, and in the case of quadruple stops indispensable.<sup>27</sup> The consequence of this constructional feature of the violin for performance is some interference in the shape of the melodic line, which—if it was based on triple- or quadruple stops—deviated from what could be obtained even on keyboard instruments, i.e. in the place of the chords a kind of *arpeggio* was performed. For these reasons, the double stops were most often multiple stops used in the violin repertoire of the 17th and the first half of the 18th century. Triple and quadruple stops are less frequent, it also seems that their function was different. Most often they occurred on downbeats or in cadences as well as in polyphonic structures. The triad can also be found on longer sections in a function similar to the melodic one (such as in the final *Presto* from the *II Rosary Sonata* by Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber), but less frequently than in the case of double stops. What is equally important, the technical complications associated with the chord play, both in the left and in the right hand, meant that the chord technique became characteristic of solo music with certain virtuoso features.

How does the song from the manuscript RM 6641 look like against this background? It already can be pointed out that it significantly

<sup>27</sup> D.D. Boyden, *Dzieje...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 293–294.

differs from these common tendencies. First of all, it is dominated by triple and quadruple stops, which themselves must be regarded as unusual. The whole composition also lacks polyphonic structures for which such a texture would be the most characteristic. Equally important, analysing the voice of *Violino*, it can be noticed that there are episodes lacking a clear melodic line—individual voices seem to be the resultant of applied harmony rather than independent structures re-enriched with a multiple stopping texture. It is also worth noting a certain rhythmic diversity. Therefore, the voice of *Violino* is not idiomatic due to the use of triple and quadruple stops, and also atypical at a more general level, as the violin are not treated as a primarily melodic instrument. It can therefore be assumed that the *Violino* part from the work is “not violin-like”, regardless of whether to take into account the scordatura or its transcription into a standard tuning. The changed tuning is the main tool for achieving this effect. Apart from the fact that from the technical point of view it allows to perform a large part of chords at the same time, it also significantly supports the sound. This is due to the significant increase in the share of empty strings relative to the standard tuning. However, if the result obtained in this way is “not violin-like”, the question remains whether it should not be interpreted as an intentional compositional solution aimed at imitating the sound of another instrument. This kind of texture immediately brings to mind typical parts of chord instruments—violas, keyboards, plucked or similar.

Due to the occurrence of solo viola parts in the repertoire from the collections of the St Anna’s Church it is a natural, first association. However, it should be emphasized, as it was already mentioned, that a multiple stopping viola technique in the discussed centre was used rather rarely, and if it was, rather in the function of a basso figurato than a solo voice. Interestingly, the *Violino* part, almost devoid of melody, has a very similar character in *Respice Mater filios*. Therefore, it is possible that this type of viola parts inspired the arrangement of the violin’s part.

The imitation of the keyboard instrument seems the least likely. Playing chords when performing the violin—even in such a good sounding arrangement, because it is based largely on empty strings, as is the case here—almost always enforces the *arpeggio* game. Meanwhile, when playing the organ, multiple stops are performed together in a

natural way. It would be more likely, therefore, that it is an imitation of a short-sounding instrument, such as a harpsichord. Contrary to appearances, the religious character of *Respice Mater filios* does not preclude such a reference. On the title page of one of the manuscripts from the collection discussed here, it was explicitly indicated that the work contained in it is intended for the harpsichord (*Cembalo*).<sup>28</sup> Although the part itself is referred to as *Organo*, the occurrence of such a term on the title card suggests not only the knowledge of this instrument, but also its potential use. Also, such a source of imitation is possible.

In the case of plucked instruments, there are no premises indicating that such an instrument could be used in the St Anne's Church. However, this does not exclude the possibility that the composition from the manuscript RM 6641 was an attempt to imitate, for example, the sound of a lute, as evidenced by the non-melodic part in chords, possible to write down in tablature.

### **Anonymous, *Surge illuminare Jerusalem*, cat. No. RM 6654, 1680**

The manuscript RM 6654 contains one composition—the Latin song *Surge illuminare Jerusalem*, intended for *Violino* and *Basso* with the accompaniment of basso continuo. Similarly to *Respice Mater filios*, it is maintained in chain form, with fragments for solo violins interlarded with vocal sections. It uses the scordatura  $c^1, f^1, a^1, c^2$ , characteristic for the key of F major, in which the song was composed. Almost the whole *Violino* part is a typical example of a technical scordatura, full of non-idiomatic figures, such as doubling  $f^1$  and  $c^2$  on two strings or passages of thirds. In the context of the issue discussed here, the fragment contained in the first *Sonata* for the violin is significant. Despite its rather large structural dimensions, it is characterised by simplicity. It is based on two chords (F major in the scordatura  $f^1, a^1, c^2$  and B flat major in the scheme  $f^1, b^1, d^2$ , written:  $d^1, a^1, e^2$  and  $a^1, b^1, f^2$ ) presented on the ascending and descending thirty-twos (example 4).

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<sup>28</sup> Anonymous, *O salutaris hostia*, cat. No. RM 6455, RISM ID: 300510808, 1682.

The image displays two staves of musical notation for a violin. The top staff is labeled 'Violino (original notation)' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Violino (transposed to the standard tuning)'. Both staves show a sequence of eighth-note chords, starting with a B major chord (F major with a lowered second) and moving through several other chords. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

Ex. 4: Anonymous, *Surge illuminare Jerusalem*, cat. No. RM 6654, part of *Violino* (written with scordatura and transposition to the standard tuning), b. 24.

Theoretically, this fragment could be performed in a standard tuning (there are no multiple stops); however, basing them on three consecutive empty strings (F major chord) and only slightly shortened (B major chord) indicates that it is typical for violins *arpeggio*. Such figures can be found in the repertoire of this time (including in the *Sonatas* op. 5 by Arcangelo Corelli), nevertheless, the standard tuning of the violin prevents their implementation only on empty strings in a manner consistent with the harmony of the Baroque era. Undoubtedly, in this case, scordatura is a decisive factor allowing the use of such technique.

Could it be, however, perceived as an imitation of another instrument, or only as a way of implementing the technical aspect? In this case, the answer is not as obvious as in the *Respice Mater filios*. From the perspective of the technical possibilities of the instrument, it is obvious that this type of *arpeggio*, based on empty strings, could be performed by playing the instruments with third-fourth tuning, such as viola or some plucked instruments. However, the assumption that this figure has been used only as such can be considered abusive. *Arpeggio* as such is idiomatic to the violin (in contrast to the multiple stopping texture present in the manuscript RM 6641). Nevertheless, the presence of the imitative-sonic aspect is not excluded, especially as such figures were not commonly used in the repertoire with scordatura. It is enough to mention that probably the most well-known and one of the most technically advanced collections of such compositions—Heinrich Franz Ignaz Biber’s *Rosary Sonata*—does not use *arpeggio* at all.



**Anonymous, *O mi Jesu, o mi Amor*, cat. No. RM 6450, 1683**

The manuscript RM 6450 contains a Latin song *O Mi Jesu, o mi Amor* for *Violino* and *Canto* with the accompaniment of two *Violas* and basso continuo (*Organo*). It is characterised by a different form than in the case of the compositions discussed above—it is in fact a cycle of variations intended for solo violin, in which particular variations are interlarded with the verses of the song, identical in terms of the musical material used. In the part of *Violino* a fifth-fourth scordatura  $a, e^1, a^1, d^2$  was used, with simultaneous use of the key signatures  $es^1, b^1$  and  $fis^2$ . What draws the highest attention is the limited use of the chords and double stops, so characteristic for scordatura. They appear only in the presentation of the topic and the first and fifth variations, but only in a few cases their performance depends on the applied tuning—it applies only to the D minor chord in the arrangement:  $d^1, f^1, a^1, d^2$ . The others would sometimes require the use of the second position in the standard tuning, but nevertheless remain within the limits of the convenience of playing the violin, and some, such as the triad  $d^1, f^1, a^1$ , are even idiomatic. What is more, in the figuration variations, the use of scordatura does not make it easy, and sometimes even makes it difficult to play the given part. Narrowing out the tuning results in the loss of the ease associated with the wide register in the performance of extended figurations. This is mainly due to the necessity to use frequent changes of position (example 5) and “skipping” the strings when playing larger intervals (example 6), which would not be a problem in a standard tuning.

Violino (original notation) E: (0) 2 (III) 4 1 4 3 2 4 2(I) 2

Violino (transposed to the standard tuning) A: 0(I) 2 4 E: 4 1 4 3 2 4 2 4

Ex. 5: Anonymous, *O mi Jesu, o mi Amor*, cat. No. RM 6450, the part of *Violino* (written with scordatura and transposition do the standard tuning), b. 18.

Violino  
(original notation)

D: 1 A:3G:3 A:2 3G:3 D:1G:3

Violino  
(transposed to the  
standard tuning)

D: 2 A:3D:0 A:2 3D:0 2 0

Ex. 6: Anonymous, *O mi Jesu, o mi Amor*, cat. No. RM 6450, the part of *Violino* (written with scordatura and transposition do the standard tuning), b. 21.

Indeed, certain figures are minimally more comfortable to perform in changed tuning; however, the differences are insignificant, generally associated with the ability to stay on one string within the individual groups based on the movement of seconds. One can also observe the opposite situation, i.e. when a fragment of the figuration would not require changing the strings, if a standard tuning was used instead of the scordatura. As a consequence, there is a clear discrepancy between the applied tuning and the idiomatic character of the part. It is possible, of course, that the composer did it on purpose—to make the virtuosic part even more demanding, or to achieve specific sound effects related to the use of not one or the adjacent strings, but extreme strings. However, such treatment would be atypical. The issue raised in this text, however, provokes a question: is the part thus obtained characterised by the features associated with the idiom of another instrument? Already in this place the answer can be affirmative. The necessity of frequent string changes resulting from a more concentrated tuning is characteristic for the viola. Therefore, in terms of technology, the part of *Violino* in *O mi Jesu, o mi Amor* acquires features characteristic rather for the gamba than the violin. Not without significance is the nature of the composition, very similar to the viola da gamba solo compositions found in the collection in question, in particular the earlier variant cycle *Begrüßt seist du Mutter*,<sup>29</sup> in which figurations are a large of part of a composition, based either on seconds, or larger skips, in practice requiring more frequent position or strings changes. It is also significant that the tuning used in this composition is a fragment of a standard tuning of treble or bass viola

<sup>29</sup> Anonymous, *Begrüßt seist du Mutter*, cat. No. RM 6533, RISM ID: 300510839, 1681.

in transposition by an octave. Thus, it can be assumed that in the discussed work scordatura could perform the function suggested by Anette Otterstedt, consisting in changing the technical capabilities of the violin in such a way that they correspond to the idiom of another instrument—in this case the viola.

### **Anonymous, *Süßes Kind der Gotter*, cat. No. RM 6594, 1686**

The manuscript RM 6594 contains a very simple, nine-strophe composition with the unidentified German text *Süßes Kind der Gotter* intended for two *Violini discordati* and *Canto*. Formally, it is based on the alternate presentation of vocal fragments and those intended for two violins. A relatively rare scordatura is used here:  $g$ ,  $d^1$ ,  $g^1$ ,  $h^1$ . In this composition no multiple stops occur at all, and the shape of the melodic line indicates that it would be definitely more idiomatic to be performed in a standard tuning. Similarly to the above-mentioned case, *O mi Jesu, o mi Amor*, also here the scordatura causes the necessity of frequent changes of the strings, although in the standard tuning the part could be performed in the first position only on adjacent strings. However, in contrast to the virtuosic cycle of variations, in this case the composition is extremely simple, which makes it very difficult to determine the actual purpose of the change of tuning. The first association, due to the use of fourth-third tuning, is the technical similarity of *Violini*'s voices to the specificity of viola. Due to the general nature of the part, which in fact is entirely based on skips between strings, this cannot be excluded. On the other hand, however, the attention is paid to the dotted rhythm, giving the composition a slightly march-like style. The use of scordatura allows a much more frequent use of the sound  $h^1$  ( $e^2$ ) performed on the empty string, moreover, there are numerous structures based on the triads. Perhaps the composer wanted to obtain a specific "trumpet effect", in the tuning and the keys unusual for this instrument—although the whole is generally maintained in G major, however, in the course of the composition the minor parallel is sometimes used instead of the main key. This forces the use of among others the dominant chord of H major, and as a consequence of the sound *dis*, unusual for the natural trumpet.

## Conclusion

From the perspective of applying the scordatura, the examples of works from the collections from the St Anna's Church on Piasek Island in Wrocław are extremely interesting. In contrast to most of the known compositions in which this technique was used, technical and sound aspects in their typical understanding do not seem to occur here or remain in the background. Moreover, their marginalisation seems to be intentional. In each of the songs, the use of scordatura is different. In the case of *Respice Mater filios*, it serves to obtain sound effects appropriate for chord instruments, perhaps the viola, harpsichord or lute. A short fragment of the *arpeggio* in *Surge et illuminare Jerusalem* could be both a simple manifestation of the technical aspect and evidence of a much deeper sensitivity of the author to a sound inspired by another instrument—again it can be the viola or violin. The most interesting example seems to be the cycle of variations *O mi Jesu, o mi Amor*. Due to its unusual, non-idiomatic character, it confirms the Anette Otterstedt' intuitive statement about attempts not to imitate but to fit the technical possibilities of violin to the typical of viola. Similar conclusions can be drawn to the song *Süßes Kind der Gotter*. Here, however, the scordatura could as well be used to imitate the trumpet—or for completely different purposes. It should be emphasized here that in each of these cases such a solution is not excluded, as is the possibility that some irregularities in the violin's part—especially in *Respice Mater filios* and *O mi Jesu, o mi Amor*—result simply from the ignorance of the copyist. However, such a statement is doubtful due to the high technical level of compositions intended for violin in a standard tuning, what proves the good knowledge of this instrument.<sup>30</sup>

As a result, the method of using the scordatura in the examples discussed above does not only arouses the research interest, but also encourages more far-reaching considerations. This is especially true for the question: why were attempts to imitate the viola violin technique made at all, since this latter instrument in the second half of the 17th century was already widely used, and the technique of playing it was at a very high level? Of course, the explanation that can be read in

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<sup>30</sup> Among others Anonymous, *O altitudo divitarum*, cat. No. RM 6440, RISM ID: 300510800, 1680; Carolus Rabovius, *Domine Jesu Christe*, cat. No. RM 6289, RISM ID: 300510752, 1680.

Annette Otterstedt is not excluded—that musicians educated as viola players made playing the violin easier. It seems, however, that in the case of collections from the St Anna's Church on Piasek Island, where idiomatic violin technique was at a high level (so the violinists had to work here), this was not the only reason for using this technique. It is also difficult without explicitly determining whether it was a general tendency or only a certain specificity of the centre. These issues are worth further considering.

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