

Lyracle is interested in the role that music has played in people's lives, particularly on mine and James's instruments, voice and viol. We choose our human story first and then choose music that will help us tell it.

The story we want to tell in *The Family Band* began with a painting by Albert Freyse from circa 1650. It depicts Duke August the Younger in his castle in Wolfenbüttel, Germany listening as his wife Sophie Elisabeth and their six children play music together. Each child is playing a viol. I came across a section of this painting in an article by Bettina Hoffmann, "Il repertorio italiano della viola da gamba dopo il 1640." In the article, Hoffman cites strong evidence that Duke August likely purchased the exact set of viols that formerly belonged to Italian composer Claudio Monteverdi.

As a big Monteverdi fan, I was excited to follow this thread. Preliminary google searches about the people in this painting will quickly lead the researcher to another one of the most famous composers of the 17th century, this time a German, Heinrich Schütz. Schütz became a close musical advisor to the Wolfenbüttel court in the 1640's, and in 1664 he sent Duke August prints of roughly 500 of his compositions. I initially expected that Schütz would be the central figure of this program, and that Duke and August and his family would offer a new way to frame beloved works by Schütz.



But of course, as I dug deeper into the family's history, the music I found kept opening windows into the family's life. At its core, Lyracle is interested in human experiences, so I shifted my curatorial focus from music by Schütz to music that gave us glimpses into this family's life together. This meant many hours of clicking through digital manuscripts, struggling to read handwriting, and taking yet another leap of faith with a program of a lot of music that we, and possibly no one alive today, has ever heard before.

It was relatively easy to come up with an informed list of repertoire that this family might have played together. This owes entirely to Duke August's magnificent library. As the seventh child in his family, August had no shot at succeeding his father, giving him the freedom to dedicate himself to scholarship and to the arts. He was and still is famous for his spectacular library of books, music, and art, which, during his lifetime, was one of the largest collections in the world. Now open to the public, August's library still contains some of the music added to the collection during his lifetime.

However, crafting a compelling program narrative around this repertoire list proved much more challenging. And the central figure of the family's musical story turned out not to be Duke August, but his second wife, Sophie Elisabeth. As such, we decided to organize the music in this program into three sections. Each focuses on a particular family relationship, and each shares Sophie Elisabeth as a common denominator.

Mother & Daughter

Music figured prominently throughout Sophie Elisabeth's entire life. She was raised in musically active courts, where she was exposed to excellent musicians and studied lute and viol. Having lost her mother at just three-years-old, her education was overseen by her step-grandfather and two highly educated and musical stepmothers. One manuscript that's still in Duke August's library is a book that dates from Sophie Elisabeth's teenage years. It contains French songs that are mostly in Sophie Elisabeth's handwriting. Karl Wilhelm Geck, who authored *the book* on Sophie Elisabeth, believes that Sophie Elisabeth arranged these songs for voice and continuo from entabulated sources as a compositional exercise. From these hundred or so songs, we chose Antoine Böesset's charming "Lobjét de les charmes."

Building on Geck's work, Hannah Spracklan-Holl postulates that Sophie Elisabeth completed this exercise under the supervision of her second stepmother, Eleonore Marie. There are even a few pieces in the book, like Böesset's "Hereux sejour," whose texts appear to be copied by a more skilled hand. Spracklan-Holl believes that this was the hand of Eleonore Marie. And with this hand, Eleonore Marie left us, 350 years later, one history of mothers transmitting knowledge to their daughters.

Later, Sophie Elisabeth saw that music was part of her own daughters' education, which we see from another musical manuscript in Duke August's library that Sophie Elisabeth titled *Patience veinque tout*. This one is a bit of a hodge podge. Pages were gradually filled over the 1640s and 50s, and pieces vary in musical style. While a few of these pieces are Sophie Elisabeth's own

compositions, most were gifted to her by friends and family. Several were gifted to her by her then teenage stepdaughter and daughter, Sibylle Ursula and Clara Auguste. These include Luigi Rossi's "Dúna bella infedele" and "Ermunterung der Seele," with music by Sophie Elisabeth.

Husband & Wife

Sophie Elisabeth couldn't have assumed her role as the family's musical matriarch without Duke August's support. During the 1640s, Duke August became increasingly preoccupied with matters related to the Thirty Years War. Having lost her dowry when the war caused her father's family financial hardship, Sophie Elisabeth became entirely dependent on Duke August to finance her musical vision for the court, which it seems that he readily supported. "Since I . . . am now financially dependent on your gentle hand completely, I have no other choice but to turn to you," she wrote in a 1641 letter urging Duke August to pay what he owed to several court musicians. In 1645, Duke August formally transferred the authority to manage the court's music and musicians to Sophie Elisabeth.

The pieces in this set by Schop, Schütz, and Staden, reflect the musical flourishing at Wolfenbüttel under Sophie Elisabeth's leadership. Heinrich Schütz began his affiliation with the Wolfenbüttel court in the 1630s, though Sophie Elisabeth had likely been aware of him since her teenage years, owing to his patronage by her step-grandfather. In 1655, Duke August named Schütz House Kapellmeister in Absentia at Sophie Elisabeth's recommendation. Schütz advised Sophie Elisabeth in her efforts to revitalize music at court and also served as her composition advisor. By the 1650s, the court was able to support larger scale chamber music and major productions like the early opera *Seelewig*, a work that Sophie Elisabeth parodied in her later compositions.

Sophie Elisabeth and Duke August were also musical collaborators. Over eighty of their joint compositions appear in *Vinetum Evangelicum*, a book of over 100 songs meant for private devotion and published under Sophie Elisabeth's pseudonym. Sophie Elisabeth composed the melodies, and Duke August composed the bass lines. This simple and intimate music reflects the family's turn to Pietism, a Lutheran movement that emphasized individual bible study, prayer, and reflection.

Mother & Son

Sophie Elisabeth actively oversaw the education of her children, including her four sons and stepsons. The first song in this set, "Nun ich itzund," has a melody composed by Sophie Elisabeth and a text by her son Ferdinand Albrecht. The remainder of the pieces in this set are connected to her stepson Anton Ulrich, who took up the family's musical mantle and expanded it into the next generation. He is the author of the texts set to music in *ChristFürstliches Davids-Harphen-Spiel*, a published book of over sixty arias by Sophie Elisabeth that she specifically noted as intended for "religious inwardness." As such, many pieces like the two we've selected, which translate to "morning song" and "evening song," meditate on daily life. We've interspersed these songs with instrumental selections by the famous composer Johann Rosenmüller, who served as Kapellmeister under Anton Ulrich. We chose two excerpts from a book that Rosenmüller dedicated to Anton Ulrich.

Anton Ulrich may have shared his parents' appreciation for music, but like most kids, he did not always share his parents' tastes. Anton Ulrich spent time abroad at the court of Louis XIV, where he became enamoured with the spectacle and theatricality of opera. In addition to founding Germany's third opera house, he composed several opera scores and libretti. While none of his music survives, several of his libretti do. In this next song, he took a melody from *Davids-Harfen-Spiel* , stuck it in his opera *Amelinde* , and wrote new words to the melody for a character who struggles to choose between the lowly shepherd she loves and a prince.

To end our imaginary afternoon in a 17th-century German castle, we wanted to choose music that involves numerous family members. The final two pieces are from *Neu erfundenes FreudenSpiel genandt FriedensSieg* , a work of musical theatre from 1642 that Sophie Elisabeth composed and arranged music for to celebrate a peace agreement that Duke August negotiated. Sophie Elisabeth was involved in the production of about 25 musical plays performed at court for invited family and friends, a few of which survive with music. In addition to music, they include stage directions and elaborate stage drawings. Many of these drawings label the people in them, and some of the plays include lists that detail who played each character. From this evidence, we know that multiple members of the immediate family acted and danced in the plays.

We hope that this exploration into the role that music played in one 17th century family's life will illuminate the possibilities for learning from and caring for one another that music offers. Lyracle is excited to share stories that highlight how music has always been a part of the most fundamental human experiences, like family relationships.

Reading List

Busch, Gudrun. "Herzogin Sophie Elisabeth und die Musik der Lieder in den Singspielen Herzog Anton Ulrichs zu Braunschweig und Lüneburg." *Studien zum deutschen weltlichen Kunstlied des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts* , 1992, pp. 127-182.

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