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The Virtuoso's Idiom:

Spectacularity and the Seventeenth Century Violin Sonata

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Musicology

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Professor Elisabeth Covel Le Guin, Chair

In this dissertation, I study the development of the violinist's idiom through the solo violin sonata in seventeenth-century Italy and Austria. In examining this development, I also study the professional lives of five composer/violinists: Giovanni Battista Fontana, Biagio Marini, Giuseppe Colombi, Heinrich Biber and Arcangelo Corelli. The techniques and strategies I use in this dissertation include biographical, stylistic, and social-historical research, as well as gestural and corporeal analysis of musical scores. I show how these violinists slowly increased their social and professional prestige, by using their virtuosity – and the works they wrote for themselves – to inspire *meraviglia* (marvel) and *diletto* (delight) in their audiences, which in turn resulted in a recognition of the virtuoso's *ingegno* (ingeniousness). I also examine how the virtuoso violinist disseminated his *ingegno* through the medium of print, and in the case of Colombi, manuscript. In so doing, I analyze the patron-performer relationships that enabled these collections to come into existence, and the

different kinds of display at work in this medium. Each relationship was formed through separate court culture and aesthetics, and for that, I situate each virtuoso in the social and artistic hierarchies in which these composers predominantly worked: Padua, Neuberg, Modena, Salzburg, and finally to Rome. Through this dissertation we can better understand the first flowering of the virtuosic idiom that would define the violin's musical repertory into the Eighteenth century and beyond.

The dissertation of Lindsey Darlene Strand-Polyak is approved.

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## GLOSSARY



Dear Reader,

In many ways, I am following in the footsteps of my virtuosic ancestors. I have included in the following pages a brief glossary covering some of the technical aspects of violin playing that I refer to in this dissertation. While I don't assume that you play the violin, I do assume that you have probably seen one and/or heard one in action at some point. So, these notes will help explain some of the technical considerations that a violinist encounters, and especially those that the virtuosi of the seventeenth century would have known. When possible, I've let my pedagogical ancestors speak for me, and have included their words or pictures. In particular, I've used Francesco Geminiani's *The Art of Playing of the Violin*, Op. 9 (1751) since he was a student of Arcangelo Corelli, and therefore a direct link to his style of playing, which is the topic of my last chapter. Please refer back to these pages later in the dissertation for the terms and concepts of violin playing which I will refer to later on. If your curiosity is piqued, I've included references to a few "in case you want to know more" treatises and books on violin technique, such as John Playford's Book II of *An Introduction to the Skill of Musick* (London: W. Godbid/John Playford, 1655), from which the above engraving was taken.

Your Humble Author,

Lindsey Strand-Polyak

## **The Seventeenth Century Violin: A Primer**

### **Violin Organology**

*The Physics of the Instrument:* The “Golden Age” of Italian violin making was centered in Cremona and Brescia, both located approximately halfway between Verona and Milan in the North Italian province of Lombardy. Not incidentally, the rise of virtuosic violin playing and all of the Italian violinists discussed in this dissertation also were of North Italian decent. Giovanni Battista Fontana and Biagio Marini were from Brescia, Giuseppe Colombi was from Modena, and Arcangelo Corelli was from Fusignano, in between Ravenna and Bologna. Heinrich Biber interacted with and was acquainted with Jacob Stainer, the most famous violin maker north of the Alps, located in Absam (near Innsbruck, Austria), and was originally more popular than his Cremonese counterparts. We also know Biber owned at least one violin from Cremona. The most famous Cremonese luthier families were the Amati, Stradivari and Guarneri; their most illustrious members were Andrea Amati, Antonio Stradivari, Giuseppe Guarneri (“del Gesù”).

### **A few of the most basic aspects of the violin in the seventeenth century.**

“The Violin” in this dissertation is a different instrument than the one that is in existence today. Among all surviving instruments from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the main body of the instrument (the box part) has remained intact. However, over time, almost every other part (Neck, fingerboard, bridge, soundpost, tailpiece, end button, nut, sometimes even the varnish on the body) has been changed or altered.

The seventeenth-century violin was fitted with a lightly curved tailpiece and bridge, allowing the four strings to be close to each other. The neck was attached straight out from the body of the instrument, with the fingerboard extending down no farther than the top corners of the C-bout. The

strings were made from either sheep or cow gut, with metal overspinning (or winding) not appearing until the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.

The violin rested on the left collarbone and the trapezius muscle, supported by lifting the left bicep muscle. Also commonly depicted is playing “off shoulder” with the violin’s ribs resting below the player’s clavicle, held in place by the left hand pressing against the instrument to hold it against the body. This technique left the player’s head and neck particularly free from the act of holding the instrument. The three examples on the following page show the different positions: the example on the left a lithograph based on the painting by Gerrit Dou “The Violin Player” (1667) and the right a portrait of Michel Corrette himself from *L’école d’Orphée* (Paris, 1738). Last, is a rare painting of a woman playing a violin (they’re often shown only holding it or staring at it lovingly) by Orazio Gentileschi (ca. 1624): “Young Woman Playing a Violin.”





Although invented ca. 1820 by violin virtuoso Louis Spohr, the chinrest was not in common use until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and Niccolò Paganini himself did not play with one.<sup>1</sup> Even as late as the 1890's, paintings such as Berthe Morisot's "Studying the Violin" (1893) don't show the performer using one. Shoulder rests were an even later addition, not introduced into the US until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> Paintings do not often show any padding (though the big fluffy collars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries might have been plenty!).

**Bowing:** "For it is to be held as a certain Principle that he who does not possess, in a perfect Degree, the Art of Bowing, will never be able to render the Melody agreeable..." (Geminiani, 6)

The bow is truly the unsung soul of the violin. In the seventeenth, eighteenth, and even much of the nineteenth Century-- when the use of vibrato was considered a special effect or ornament, much like a trill-- bowing was the defining element of a performer's sound.

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley Ritchie, *Before the Chinrest*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University), 10.

<sup>2</sup> The first recorded patent for a marketable shoulder rest in the US is by Gustav Becker in 1908. See US Patent #908541. Searchable at: [www.patft.uspto.gov](http://www.patft.uspto.gov)

There are two main parts of the bow: **The Frog**, where the right hand holds the bow, and the **Tip**, the skinny part at the other end. There are two basic kinds of bowing: Down (II), which is a pulling motion away from the instrument, starting at the Frog, and Up (V), which is a pushing motion towards the instrument, starting at the Tip. In fact, in French, they don't use the down or up, but instead use *Tirer* (pull), and *Pousser* (push). These concepts of “push” and “pull” are productive ways of thinking about bowing technique, because they make it clear that weight is being applied to the string in some way, instead of the bow listlessly gliding back and forth.

The basics of bow technique are excellently summarized by Geminiani:

“The Tone of the Violin principally Depends upon the right Management of the Bow, the Hair being turned inward against the Back or Outside of the Thumb, in which Position it is to be held free and easy, and not stiff. The Motion is to proceed from the Joints of the Wrist and Elbow in playing quick Notes, and very little or not at all from the Joint of the Shoulder; but in playing long Notes, where the Bow is drawn from one End of it to the other, the Joint of the Shoulder is also a little employed. The Bow must always be drawn parallel with the Bridge, (which can't be done if it is held stiff) and must be pressed upon the strings with the Fore-finger only, and not with the whole Weight of the Hand. The Best Performers are least sparing of their Bow; and make Use of the whole of it, from the Point to that Part of it under, and even beyond their Fingers.”<sup>3</sup>

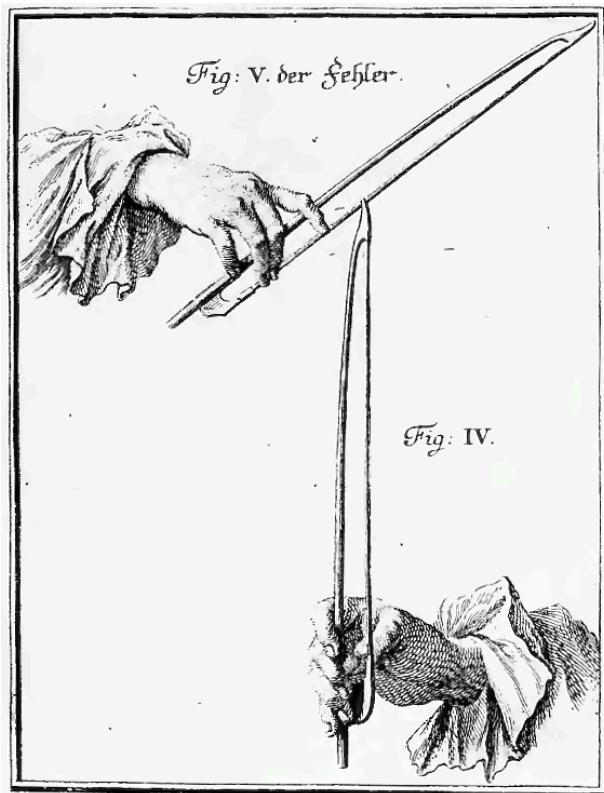
## **Bow Organology**

The bow in the seventeenth century much more closely resembled the weapon with which it shares its name. Made of hard, strong, flexible tropical woods (either snakewood or ironwood), it was approximately the length of the instrument itself (about a 16-20 inches), and had a small frog that wedged in between the hair and the stick to tighten the hair. The tip was narrow and dart-like,

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<sup>3</sup> Francesco Geminiani, *The Art of the Playing on the Violin, Op. IX*. (London: J. Johnson, 1751), 2

with little space between where the hair attached and the point of the tip itself. The bow was unequally weighted, with the additional weight at the frog due to the extra material of the frog itself and the bowhand holding the bow. In playing, this discrepancy in weight makes a built-in ‘inequality’ to the bowing patterns, with Down and Up sounding different. The Italian bow hold in particular was quite similar to the modern bowhold, as is exemplified by the figure below from Leopold Mozart’s *Violinschule*, 56.



## ARTICULATION

### *Fingering:*

The biggest aspect to remember with violin fingering patterns is that the thumb is not involved.

Unlike a keyboard where the thumb may be used (although as late as the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, JS Bach

mentions in the *Klavierbuchlein* that many keyboardists weren't using their thumbs), or a cello, where the thumb was used in the uppermost registers, the thumb in violin playing has a crucial, supportive role. It rests along the side of the neck, helping to support the instrument. Particularly in upper-position work, the thumb will increasingly move up and under the neck of the instrument, stabilizing the instrument to allow the violinist to play high on the fingerboard.

The fingering numbering and labeling is as follows:

First finger (1)=Index finger,  
Second Finger (2)= Middle Finger  
Third Finger (3)= Ring Finger  
Fourth Finger (4)= Pinky Finger

See the examples below for charts of fingering patterns and placement for different notes on the fingerboard. The first is from Bartolomeo Bismantova's *Compendium Musicale* (Ferrara, 1677), the second, from Leopold Mozart's *Grundliche Violinschule* (1770).

*Regole per accordare e suonare il Violino.*

*Scala di Numeri, sopra le quattro Corde del Violino che corrispondano alle Note della Scala di sotto Musicale; ed anco la sua Accordatura da una Corda all'altra per quinta; come si vede di sotto; come anco il Nome, a tutte le Corde. Esempio.*

G. sol. re. us.	0123			Basso.
D. la. sol. re.	0123			Tenore.
A. la. mi. re.		0123		Alto.
E. la. mi.			01234	Canzo.

G. A. B. C.	D. E. F. G.	A. B. C. D.	E. F. G. A. B.
0. 1. 2. 3.	0. 1. 2. 3.	0. 1. 2. 3.	0. 1. 2. 3. 4.

*Ogni nota vuole la sua Arcada; cioè una nota vuole l'arcada in giù; e l'altra in su; ma non sempre.*

§. 13.

Die Violin hat 4. Seyten, deren jede ihre Benennung von einem dieser 7. Buchstaben hat. Nämlich:



Die kleinste oder feinste Seyte heist (E); die neben ihr etwas grössere (A); die folgende (D); und die stärkste heist (G).

§. 14.

Um nun mehrere Töne hervorzubringen muß man die Seyten mit den Fingern belegen. Dieses geschieht aber in folgender Ordnung:

Die interste und tiefeste Seyte.				Die zwote Seyte.			
G	a	b	c	D	e	f	g
leer.	1	2	3	leer.	1	2	3
Die dritte Seyte.				Die vierte und kleinste Seyte.			
A	b	c	d	E	f	g	a
leer.	1	2	3	leer.	1	2	3

Man sieht hier ganz klar die mit den grossen Buchstaben bemerkte 4. leeren Seyten, und nach ieder die mit den Fingern auf denselben zu nehmende übrigen Töne; welche sich der Schüler wohl in das Gedächtniß fassen muß: damit er ohne die Buchstaben auf den Noten zu sehen, und ohne vielem Nachdenken alsogleich weis, was für einen Buchstabenname ieder Note führet, sie stehe wo sie wolle. Nicht minder ist hier wohl anzumerken, daß das unter den 7. Buchstaben vorkommende, und mit dem Zeichen (b) bemerkte B, oder (b) bisher meistens mit dem Buchstabe (H) ist benennet worden. Wovon man die Ursache an seinem Orte lesen wird.

Des

### *Staccato vs. legato:*

*Staccato* comes from the Italian verb “*staccare*” which means “to tear away from” or “to turn away from.” It’s also a shortened form of “*distaccare*” or “to detach.” It involves a series of short, detached strokes in which the bow is vigorously pulled from the string into the air, giving the sound a placed, forceful, clipped sound. In many ways it resembles the sounds of the syllables “sta,” “cca” and “to” in the word *staccato* itself.

*Legato* comes from the Italian “*Legare*” or “tied (together)” or “to bind” in some way. (Think of the English word “ligature.”). Legato means either the manner in which something is played with separate strokes making them seem blended together with their smoothness, or literally “tied”

together, with multiple notes being played together under one bow stroke, and the bow slur connecting the sounds together in a smooth manner. Just as the “messa di voce” was prized in Baroque singing, “One of the Principal Beauties of the Violin is the swelling or encreasing [sic] and softening the Sound; which is done by pressing the Bow upon the Strings with the Fore-finger more or less.”<sup>4</sup>

### *On string vs. off string*

The bow bounces off the string naturally due to the colliding tensions present on both the bow hair and the violin’s strings. Whether a performer uses this bounce or resists it is the basis of the differentiation of all bow strokes. On the string means that the bow is seldom taken away from the contact with the string, giving the sound a smoother, more connected, or slurred manner. Off the string is when the bow is pulled from the string, or bounced off, or launched off, in such a manner that that connection of bow and string is lost for longer or shorter amounts of time.


### *“The Rule of the Down-Bow”*

A common practice of baroque string playing was the “rule of the down bow,” which generally dictated that strong beats should have a down bow (due to the greater weight at the frog as opposed to the tip), giving a strong stress on the stronger beats of the measure. This practice was already a concern in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with Riccardo Rogniono (1592), and had already been written about throughout Italy, Austria and France by the time of Corelli.

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<sup>4</sup> Francesco Geminiani, *The Art of the Playing on the Violin, Op. IX* (London: J. Johnson, 1751), 2.

## Expression marks

Much of the exact bowing of a particular passage has to be inferred, as instructions from period treatises leave much of this up to the performer for a given passage. Geminiani states that “For it is not sufficient alone to give them [the notes] their true Duration, but also the Expression proper to each of these Notes. By not considering this, it often happens that many good Compositions are spoiled by those who attempt them.” (Geminiani, 8) His Example XX is then a series of general rules for bowing, complete with *Buono* (good), *Cattivo* (bad) and *Ottimo* (the best) examples. In addition, in a mark that is particular to Geminiani, you’ll notice the “*Cattivo o Particolare*,” which is curious because it is literally “Bad or particular.” He means that something could be so wrong, bad or ugly that it could become a unique special effect. This becomes one of the crucial aspects of seventeenth-century virtuosic technique, transforming the ugly into the amusement of the unexpected, and therefore, becoming something good after all. The / marks mean plain equal sounding notes, and the ‘p’ marks indicate staccato, with the  marks meaning a swell. In particular you’ll notice the variety of strokes and amount of variation indicated. (See the following page for example)

## Esempio XX

*Adagio, o And<sup>te</sup>*

1.<sup>o</sup> 2.<sup>o</sup> 3.<sup>o</sup>  
Buono. Mediocre. Buono.

4.<sup>o</sup> 5.<sup>o</sup> 6.<sup>o</sup>  
Cattivo Cattivo o particolare. Cattivo.

7.<sup>o</sup> 8.<sup>o</sup> 9.<sup>o</sup> 10.<sup>o</sup>  
Buono. Ottimo. Cattivo o particolare. Buono.

11.<sup>o</sup> 12.<sup>o</sup>  
Meglio. Cattivo o partic.<sup>re</sup>

13.<sup>o</sup> 14.<sup>o</sup>  
Cattivo o partic.<sup>re</sup> Particolare.

*All.<sup>o</sup> o Presto*

1.<sup>o</sup> 2.<sup>o</sup> 3.<sup>o</sup> 4.<sup>o</sup> 5.<sup>o</sup>  
Buono. Mediocre. Cattivo. Buono. Ottimo.

6.<sup>o</sup> 7.<sup>o</sup> 8.<sup>o</sup> 9.<sup>o</sup>  
Buona. Meglia. Pessimo. Buono.

10.<sup>o</sup> 11.<sup>o</sup> 12.<sup>o</sup> 13.<sup>o</sup>  
Cattivo. Buono. Ottimo. Ottimo

### *Bariolage*

A kind of virtuosic passage in which the bow crosses repeatedly back and forth between 2, or among 3 or even 4 strings. Usually one of the strings is open. This wasn't always notated, as it was left to the performer's choice when confronted with a series of chords how to bow it for desired effect.

### *Double-stops, Triple stops, Quadruple stops*

Terms for the playing of complete or partial chords: the violin is both a melodic and a chordal instrument. The term refers to how many strings are being 'stopped' simultaneously by fingers on different strings, while being bowed simultaneously (or in rapid alternation through bariolage). One of the aspects that makes chordal playing more difficult, other than the fact that the performer is keeping more than one finger on the fingerboard at a time, is that the curvature of the bridge normally prevents the sounding of more than one string at a time. In chordal passages, the bow weight and energy must be increased to grab and sound more than one of the strings at once. Because of this, chords often sound louder and are used in more grandiose sections.

### *Shifting (and positions)*

Shifting (Geminiani calls it "Transpositions of the Hand") is the technique by which the left hand leaves the home position of holding the violin at the base of the neck (called the nut), and moves up in pitch on the fingerboard, inward toward the player's body ('shifting up'), or back down in pitch and away from the player's body ('shifting down'). On a baroque violin, the player rests their chin briefly on the body of the instrument during the shift, especially shifting down, in order to prevent the violin from slipping off the shoulder. Shifting is done for two reasons: 1) In order to access higher-pitched notes on the violin, and 2) to keep a passage on a particular string for affectual or

expressive reasons (for example: a simple passage that could be played on the A string gains a more strained and mysterious sound when played farther up the neck of the instrument on the D string).

Francesco Geminiani demonstrates this in Essempio 1D, showing how the same note can be played with different fingers on various strings.<sup>5</sup> (“3a” refers to the D, or third, string, and “4a” to the G, or fourth)

The image shows a musical score for a violin exercise titled 'Essempio 1D'. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first measure is marked with a '7' and a '4a' above it, indicating the seventh fret on the fourth string. The second measure is marked with a '3a' and a '4a' above it, indicating the third and fourth strings. The third measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The fourth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The fifth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The sixth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The seventh measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The eighth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The ninth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The tenth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The eleventh measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The twelfth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The thirteenth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The fourteenth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The fifteenth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The sixteenth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The seventeenth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The eighteenth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The nineteenth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The twentieth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The twenty-first measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The twenty-second measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The twenty-third measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The twenty-fourth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The twenty-fifth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The twenty-sixth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The twenty-seventh measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The twenty-eighth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The twenty-ninth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The thirtieth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The thirty-first measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The thirty-second measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The thirty-third measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The thirty-fourth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The thirty-fifth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The thirty-sixth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The thirty-seventh measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The thirty-eighth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The thirty-ninth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The fortieth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The forty-first measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The forty-second measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The forty-third measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The forty-fourth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The forty-fifth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The forty-sixth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The forty-seventh measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The forty-eighth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The forty-ninth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The fiftieth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The fifty-first measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The fifty-second measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The fifty-third measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The fifty-fourth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The fifty-fifth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The fifty-sixth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The fifty-seventh measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The fifty-eighth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The fifty-ninth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The sixtieth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The sixty-first measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The sixty-second measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The sixty-third measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The sixty-fourth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The sixty-fifth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The sixty-sixth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The sixty-seventh measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The sixty-eighth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The sixty-ninth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The seventieth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. 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The eightieth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The eighty-first measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The eighty-second measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The eighty-third measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The eighty-fourth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The eighty-fifth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The eighty-sixth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The eighty-seventh measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The eighty-eighth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The eighty-ninth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The ninetieth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The hundredth measure is marked with a '1a' and a '2a' above it, indicating the first and second strings. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Shifting was not referred to directly as a pedagogical concept in treatises until Geminiani’s work and Leopold Mozart’s *ViolinSchule* (1756). However, violinists like Marco Uccellini (Op. 4, 1645), Heinrich Biber (*Mystery Sonatas*, ~1676), as well as students of Corelli like Francesco Geminiani and Giovanni Battista Somis, and non-students like J.S. Bach, were all writing music necessitating this practice for at least 100 years before it was theorized. Treatises before the mid-eighteenth century were much more focused on things like style, sound, dance types, etc., and not the kind of etude-style work that Geminiani and Mozart present.

*Battuto*

<sup>5</sup> Judy Tarling, *Baroque String Playing for Ingenious Learners*, (St. Albans, UK: Corda Music), 78 and Geminiani, 3.

In Italian this is the past participle of *Battere* “to beat”, so it means “beaten.” This special and uncommon technique is often used in military or battle passages, where the violin takes a beating by the bow, as it smacks against the string and bounces back off quickly and repeatedly. This technique provides visual as well as aural excitement as player enacts controlled chaos by beating the hair of the bow onto the string with great force and then controlling the bow as it bounces off, catching in the recoil, only to do it again. The resulting sound is noisy: hair, wood and gut clashing together.

As you can see just within these few pages, there are countless ways of playing a single note or passage differently with varied bowstrokes, of which only a few have been dealt with here. In many ways the early treatises took a similar approach: they did not try to be exhaustive encyclopedias, but rather, they suggested a range of possibilities, leaving the rest to the player’s own inventiveness (*ingegno*). It is how a violinist takes these different techniques and applies them to a particular piece which will differentiate them from their colleagues and competitors, creating an individual sound.

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## PRESENTATIONS

Strand-Polyak, Lindsey Darlene. "Between *Virtù* and *Virtuosità*: Giuseppe Colombi, Francesco II D'Este, and Private Performance in the Modenese Este Court." Paper given at the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual GAMMA-UT Conference, "Music and Spectacle," University of Texas at Austin, 23 March 2013.

\_\_\_\_\_. "*Virtù e Virtuoso*: Private and Public Spectacle in the Modenese Este Court." Paper given at the Winter Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Pacific Southwest Chapter, California State University, Long Beach, 23 February 2013.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Mad Scenes and Meltdowns: Pathos and Dissolution and the Seventeenth-Century Spectacle Sonata." Lecture-Recital given at ECHO, "Sonic Doom" Conference, University of California, Los Angeles, 13 May 2011.

\_\_\_\_\_. "First Time at the Opera Boys? Opera, American Alcohol Advertising, and the Disassociation with Cultural Capital." Paper given at the Pacific Northwest Graduate Research Conference, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, 20 February 2011.

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\_\_\_\_\_. "Slickly Produced, Kid Tested, Parent Approved: \*NSYNC and the construction and manipulation of a girlish masculinity." Paper given at the Harvard Graduate Research Forum, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 27 February 2010.

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\_\_\_\_\_. "Creating a Niche Market: The Violin as Spectacle in Seventeenth-Century Italy." Paper given at the Fall Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Pacific-Southwest Chapter, University of California-Riverside, Riverside, CA, 4 October 2008.

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6

## **Introduction:**

### *The Curious Case of Giovanni Battista Fontana*

By the time she actually stops to ask herself why she's playing the violin, she has been doing it so long already that the answer to the question is simply: because she can't imagine doing anything else. And by the time that is the answer to the question, performers don't often stop to think why they do this in the first place.

The violin in many ways is like the perfect Early Modern mistress. A mix of impossible juxtapositions: able to cause exquisite agony and enjoyable frustration to her suitor, one day allowing his advances, the next thwarting every possible option. Every day requires work, dedication, diligence, nurturing, or the relationship will sour. Some days he wants nothing to do with her, wants

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<sup>6</sup> Annibale Carracci, "Angel Playing a Violin" (sketch study for the altar piece of the "Baptism of Christ" in the church of San Gregorio, Bologna), 1575-1609, red chalk drawing on paper © Trustees of the British Museum

to leave her alone and never return, and yet every day he comes back, caressing her neck and shoulders, obeying her demands.

She will leave her amorous marks upon him, both seen and unseen: a semi-permanent welt on his neck, an over-developed bicep muscle on the left side, an under-developed muscle on the right side; one under-developed tricep muscle on the left, one over-developed muscle on the right. A left hand, that after 25 years, is just a little longer than the right. A lack of strength in the violinist's right hand, from un-training one of the most basic ingrained human elements: to grip an object put in the hand.<sup>7</sup> By the end, his bite and jaw will even be offset, shoved just a little to the right from holding the object of his affection.

And just like a mistress, in exchange for the violinist's decades of undying loyalty the violin gives him, not only pain, but also pleasure: a voice he was not born with, in a range he never could have developed from within his own vocal cords (at least, not without surgery), and the ability to make utterances that never could have come from his own lips. Long before Tartini's deal with the devil, a century of seventeenth-century violinists had already made their own contracts with this marvelous mistress. And for a select few, the violin and the persona of the violin virtuoso offered something even more elusive: prestige and social ascendance.

400 years later after its ascendance the violin is one of the most popular and competitive instruments with which to make a living. Its solo repertoire is extremely large. Having long been a mainstay of traditional musics all over Eurasia, it traveled its way to every nook and cranny of European art music, and has become the continual sound of the heartstrings in classic film music.

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<sup>7</sup> Known as the palmar grasp reflex, it is a reflex in which an object (such as a finger) is put into the palm of a baby and light pressure is applied. In response, the flexion will occur in all fingers and the baby will grip the object and cling so tightly that if the baby were lifted this grip would support his or her body weight. See: Yasuyuki Futagi, Yasuhisa Toribe, and Yasuhiro Suzuki. "The Grasp Reflex and Moro Reflex in Infants: Hierarchy of Primitive Reflex Responses." *International Journal of Pediatrics*. 2012 (2012), Article ID: 191562.

The violin has become the objectification of European art music itself, so that it seems that western musical cultures don't imagine the time when it wasn't at the top of the musical food chain.

But it was not always so. As late as 1600, this famous courtesan was still primarily a street urchin; her rise in station took place rapidly over the 17th century. Of course, the instrument itself didn't sprout wings and fly with the angels (although it was often painted in their arms). She formed alliances with talented, charismatic individuals who used their virtuosity to achieve social ascendance. They managed to transform the social position of the violinist from an outsider, banned to taverns and dance classes, to the upper echelons of courtly circles. This dissertation shows how these violinists slowly increased their social and professional prestige, by using their virtuosity – and the works they wrote for themselves – to rise from the status of lower class artisans to those revered as artists. I trace a historical trajectory from Giovanni Battista Fontana, who died of the plague in 1630, leaving no trace, to Arcangelo Corelli, buried in 1713 a few feet away from the painter Raphael, in one of the greatest architectural marvels of the world: the Pantheon of Rome. Through their private performances and public printed creations, violin virtuosi crafted a new narrative of the violin and the virtuoso, redefining the instrument as a site of creativity, inventiveness, power and prestige.

In this introductory chapter, I seek to estrange the reader from modern day views and perceptions of the violin, and tease out why it, and the men who played it, were able to effect such a radical change. I will do this first through comparing the violin and its chief seventeenth-century rival, the cornetto, in terms of the aural and visual experience of hearing them play the music of Giovanni Battista Fontana, a composer whose salvation from anonymity is emblematic of the violin's social transformation. Fontana's Sonata Seconda, published in 1640, suggests how the violin

virtuoso may have used physical and sonic spectacle to negotiate power and prestige with his patrons.

### 1. The Cornetto and Fontana:



Example: Jan Sadeler, “Virgin kneeling in prayer with angels,” 1585. Engraving on Paper. 205mm x 290mm © Trustees of the British Museum<sup>8</sup>

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As the priest gets up to perform the sacrament of the Elevation of the Host, his fellow priest and Maestro di Capella Giovanni Reghino, seated in the congregation of the faithful, sees the

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<sup>8</sup> Note the cornetto player under the left music print. What’s striking about this engraving is that all the angel-musicians are clearly looking at the printed music (by Cornelis Verdonck), not the Virgin. This is fairly unusual picture of musicking particularly because of the focus on the printed page, making an assertion that music suitable for the Virgin is written down and printed—none of those oral unrecorded improvisations!

cornettist take his place next to the organist. Reghino is particularly interested in his performance: he had hired him to play a sonata by Fontana, the great violinist and his personal friend, dead now these ten years. After the last two years spent editing Fontana's pieces for publication with Magni in Venice, it was time to finally hear them again. Too bad the cornetto player had to transpose it first... he had said that he had to take it down a step in order to make it more playable and fit better on the instrument. Strange... thought Reghino, but not strange enough that he had considered bringing up with Magni in regards to the publication. Fontana had been a violinist, so they'd leave the sonata as is.

The priest administering Mass lifts the cup, holds it aloft, and brings it to his lips, the signal for the music to start. The cornettist, mirroring the priest's movement, raises the dark curved wooden instrument, barely visible in the shadows of the organ loft. He breathes, lifting the instrument to cue the beat, and presses the instrument to his lips. A clear yet slightly nasal sound blooms forth, filling the basilica with a yawning ascending figure, the glow of the major thirds between the organ and cornetto bouncing off the intricately carved ceiling as the saints above look down from their gilded arches. The cornettist suavely curves his phrase, smoothly rolling through the runs, descending to the low register for the cadence, the timbre changed to dark and plaintive. Now he begins a canzona motive, articulating the three-note figure with a crisp, buoyant "pa-pa-pa." Reghino notes how the cornettist is able to provide such a bright contrast between the bell-like canzona figures and the smooth, slithery, gliding passaggi, which sound explosive and ripped across, one note barely distinguishable from the next, so that the peaks and valleys of Fontana's gestures emerge all in one rush, the clarity and warm projection blending perfectly in the acoustics of the church.

Reghino's gaze turns away from the saints and back to the cornettist, as he sways slightly back and forth, otherwise keeping the instrument pressed firmly to his lips until a moment of rest,

pulling it away for a break. All that sound, such ingenuity and variety, but seemingly nothing was happening except a little lift of the fingers from the instrument...che sprezzatura, thinks Reghino, closing his eyes to let his ears drink in the rapturous sound of the sonata.



Example: Opening of Sonata Seconda, Giovanni Battista Fontana

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## 2. The Cornetto as Competitor

Cornettists had reigned supreme as instrumental virtuosi in the sixteenth century, taking the place of prominence in processions, supplanting the shawms in the Venetian *piffari* (wind bands), and substituting for boy sopranos in choral music.<sup>9</sup> The cornetto was one of the chief protagonists of the virtuoso division style of the late 16th century, and a small but very distinguished solo repertory for the instrument was appearing in print. However, as the seventeenth century progressed, not everyone agreed that cornetti belonged indoors inside courts and churches. Vincenzo Galilei commented in his *Dialogo* (1632) “These instruments are never heard in the private chambers of judicious gentlemen, lords and princes, where only those [musicians] take part whose judgment, taste and hearing are unsullied; for from such rooms [these instruments] are totally

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<sup>9</sup> Bruce Dickey, “Cornett and Sackbut.” *The Performer’s Guide to Seventeenth Century Music*, ed. Stewart Carter, rev. Jefferey Kite-Powell, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 2012), 106.

prohibited.”<sup>10</sup> Dual markings for “*violino overo cornetto*” were becoming commonplace, and by 1630, the violin was considered on equal virtuosic footing with the cornetto, surpassing it in popularity by 1650. Roark Miller points out that one of the reasons the violin virtuoso Biagio Marini was hired at St. Mark’s in 1652 was because there were so few cornettists available in the chapel and city.<sup>11</sup> It became “commercially unattractive” as Bruce Dickey phrases it, to associate newly printed music with the old-fashioned cornetto; music written specifically for the cornetto after 1650 tends to be more trumpet-like, with less of the virtuoso division-style writing of its heyday. By the end of the seventeenth century, the quality of players had evidently gotten so bad that in Bologna that city officials passed an ordinance banning the most famous cornetto band, the Concerto Palatino, from any public events or functions, citing unpleasant dissonance and public scandal.<sup>12</sup>

The cornetto, like the violin, is made of wood. A single, often curved piece of wood is split open, given a conical bore in the interior, sometimes carved in a decorative diamond pattern towards the top of the instrument, and then bound back together and wrapped with leather or parchment. The sound-holes in the instrument were covered with the fingers, which lifted to change notes [See example below<sup>13</sup>]. Fingering resembled that used for the recorder, but the sound production was completely different. The mouthpiece was a small wooden cup similar to a trumpet mouthpiece, against which the player buzzed their lip. Articulation was done through a system of syllabic tonguing, and with a subtle lifting and adjusting of lip pressure, or embouchure.

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<sup>10</sup> Bruce Dickey, “Cornett and Sackbut,” 101.

<sup>11</sup> Roark Miller, “Divorce, Dismissal, but no disgrace: Biagio Marini’s Career revisited.” *Recercare* 9 (1997): 10

<sup>12</sup> Bruce Dickey, “Cornett and Sackbut,” 101.

<sup>13</sup> Examples of Curved and straight cornetto, Museo della Storia della Musica, Bologna

**Example: Examples of the curved and straight variants of the cornetto**



What's inherent in this is that the modes of production are hidden from the viewer. The tongue, the main mode of expression and articulation, is hidden in the mouth, and the power for sound is supplied by air passing invisibly through the lips. A cornettist has to maintain a very firm amount of pressure between lip and instrument, limiting the degree to which the performer can gesticulate with the instrument. The fingers lift up one at a time, a very subtle movement. Also, by the very nature of playing a wind instrument, a performer's head, neck, and face are engaged in sound production sharply limiting expression through these areas of the body. The spectator watching a cornetto performance is forced to focus more on what they hear, for there is little visual interest.

Like players of any wind instrument, cornettists need times to *breathe between phrases*. Additionally, the amount of pressure needed to keep the cornetto embouchure is so great that the player must periodically take the instrument off the lips and away from the face. Works like those of

violinists Biagio Marini or Carlo Farina, with long lines and few rests, are extremely difficult for a cornettist to play without hyperventilating. Fontana's sonatas generally allow for this need, with regular moments of rest where the continuo has small solos. However, he doesn't always write idiomatically for the cornetto. Some of his sonatas, such as Sonata Sesta and Sonata Terza, have passages with lot of interval hopping (of a third or fourth or more). On the violin this creates opportunity to vary the character and make the most of the different string timbres. However, on cornetto, this creates a kind of un-virtuosic difficulty. The instrument is much better suited to contiguous melodic motion; for disjunct writing, the performer has to repeatedly change his or her embouchure just to make the passages playable, without the payoff of timbre change or any possibility of display.

While Fontana's volume of sonatas was published in 1641 by Bartolomeo Magni, the pieces were written much earlier: some time between 1610-1630 is our best guess, since archival evidence discovered by Rodolfo Baroncini puts Fontana's birth around 1589.<sup>14</sup> During this earlier point in the seventeenth century, published music for soprano instruments was labeled for the catchall title of "canto" or "soprano." We see this in Dario Castello's *Sonate in Stil Moderno* (1621). Castello, who played both violin and bassoon, wrote very flexibly for both violin and cornetto.

The violin and cornetto were similarly matched, then, for a time. Both were referred to as having expressive attributes most similar to the human voice out of all the musical instruments. They also had similar ranges, the cornetto's range going comfortably from middle c (c') to a", with the occasional ability to go a few notes above and below those bounds, on a good day and in the

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<sup>14</sup> Rodolfo Baroncini, "Giovan Battista Fontana <<dal violino>>: nuove acquisizioni biografiche?" *Recercare* 2 (1990): 214.

right situations. So, they could be easy substitutes for each other in canzone or trio sonatas, or when a colleague missed Sunday morning mass.

Fontana's sonatas were published when the cornetto was already in decline; nevertheless the publisher, keeping options open, elected to retain the notation 'per il Violino, o cornetto...' And as we shall see, Giovanni Reghino's Foreword to the publication makes no bones about the dominance of the violin, both in general, and in the particular case of Fontana's virtuosity.

One of the aspects that made the violin so attractive as a virtuosic instrument was precisely the characteristic which made it inappropriate within the aesthetics of five- or six-part viol consort music, and had relegated it to dance floors and taverns: its large, sonorous and projecting sound. Sixteenth-century French composer Philibert Jambe de Fer referred to it disparagingly in his *Epitome musical* (Lyons, 1556), in which he describes the differences between the violin and its flat-backed cousin, the viol. The first mention of the difference reads almost like the equivalent of a modern-day viola joke:

“Why do you call one type of instrument viols and the other violins?

We call viols those with which gentlemen, merchants, and other virtuous people pass their time.”<sup>15</sup>

He then goes on to describe the physical differences between the instruments and their utility, referring to the violin as practical for dancing and processions because it was tuned in fifths and you could carry it around outdoors. In closing, he dismisses the violin, declaring:

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<sup>15</sup> Philibert Jambe de Fer, *Epitome Musical* (1556), as quoted in David Boyden, *History of Violin Playing* (Oxford: Oxford University), 32.

“I have not illustrated the said violin because you can think of it as resembling the viol, added to which there are few persons who use it save those who make a living from it through their labour.”<sup>16</sup>

Essentially, according to Jambe de Fer, a sixteenth-century person would recognize the violin when he heard it or saw it, but otherwise needn't bother to know any more. But Jambe de Fer's dismissive statement points to the violin's ubiquity. Whether one loved it or hated it was a different story, but his assumption that everyone knew about it shows its dissemination into European musical cultures.

### *“Meraviolino”*

The rise of the violin occurred as Italian courts became entranced with the aesthetics of *meraviglia*, epitomized in performances such as at the 1589 *Intermedi* for the wedding of Ferdinando di Medici of Florence, and in institutions such as the *Concerto delle donne*, founded by Duke Alfonso II D'Este in Ferrara in 1580. Musicking, influenced by the aesthetics of *Meraviglia* and *ingegno*, became more of a spectator sport than a participatory sport. In the late sixteenth and into the seventeenth century, the arts were driven by the spectator's desire to be amazed. Nina Treadwell describes it this way: “the term *meraviglia* was ... used to refer to human responses to the marvelous, including expressions of astonishment, surprise, admiration, or fear.”<sup>17</sup> This necessity for the audience to be surprised or even shocked meant that the artists had to continuously innovate, coming up with new displays of invention (*inventione*), in the hopes their audiences would notice not only their technical skill, but also their singularity.

“A term commonly employed for this attribute was *ingegno*, which described the artist's imaginative capacity to invent or fashion the new. The notion of *ingegno*

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>17</sup> Nina Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court* (Los Angeles: University of California, 2008), 31.

variously suggested imagination, inventiveness or wit. By the turn of the seventeenth century, the term began to circulate more widely in literary circles, especially among GB Marino and his contemporaries, who regarded *ingegno* as a poetic faculty *par excellence*.<sup>18</sup>

This shift in aesthetics was reflected strongly in music, where the display of soprano virtuosity became a desired spectacle, both in the private sphere of court display, and in public, with the opening of the first public opera houses in 1637. The violin began to be welcome both indoors and upstairs, included in sacred and secular court music-making, and praised for many of the qualities that had previously damned it. Giovanni Battista Doni, in his *Annotazioni sopra il Compendio d'Generi, de'Modi della Musica*, (1640) summed up the violin this way:

“In sum, in the hand of a skillful player, the violin represents the sweetness of the lute, the suavity of the viol, the majesty of the harp, the force of the trumpet, the vivacity of the fife, the sadness of the flute, the pathetic quality of the cornett; as if every variety, as in the great edifice of the organ, is heard with marvelous artifice.”<sup>19</sup>

This statement is coming from a theorist, not a mere performer of music. Doni was a music theorist and classicist who studied Greek harmony, and worked in the upper echelons of the Papal courts of the Barberini in Rome, French courts in Paris, and finally became the consul of the Accademia

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<sup>18</sup> Treadwell, 33.

<sup>19</sup> “...al quale il Violino tanto s'appresa, che alcuna volta l'una dall'altro malamente si discerne. In somma egli rappresenta, quando E in mano d'un perito Sonatore, la dolcezza del Liuto, la suoavita della Viola, la maesta dell'Arpa, l'aveemezna della Tromba, la vivacita del Piffero, il querulo del Flauto, il patetico del Cornetto; & quasi ogni varietà, che nella gran macchina dell'Organo, con mirabil'artisizio si sente.” Giovanni Battista Doni, *Annotazioni sopra il Compendio d'Generi, de'Modi della Musica* (Rome: Andrea Fei, 1640), 338.

Fiorentina in Florence.<sup>20</sup> His interest and knowledge as well as his social status would put him at the very highest level of authority and connoisseurship.

Of particular note is the range of instruments Doni claims the violin can draw upon and imitate, as well as the consciously constructed quality of the marvel. This ability of the violin to mimic the world around it was already being highlighted in works by Farina (*Capriccio Stravagante*, 1626), and Marini (*Capriccio in modo di lira*, 1626/9), who will be discussed in Chapter 1. It would be greatly developed later by Giuseppe Colombi in Modena (Chapter 2) and Heinrich Biber in Salzburg (Chapter 3). The crafting of this “super instrument” artifice was an aspect of the spectacle of the violin that was not lost on either the spectators or the practitioners. Doni goes so far as to put it almost in the same class as the organ, which would have been high praise indeed. The violin as mimic, whether it was Orpheus (Marini), trumpets (Colombi), drunkards (Biber), or chickens (Uccellini, Farina), would be one of the ways in which the virtuoso would display his excellence in ingenuity.

One of the ways in which the violin presents this myriad of imitative spectacles is through focusing the spectator on the *visual*. Even as non-sounding *object*, much attention was paid and given to adorning the instrument, from the graceful arches of the F-holes to the artistic carving of the scroll. Extra special design elements such as elaborate carvings, inlaid ebony, double purfling, and other non-functional touches were often added to violins by luthiers crafting a violin for a particular royal commission. (It was a sign of the violin’s ascendance that nobility wanted to specially commission the production of these instruments at all!) Gasparo da Salo of Brescia transformed a violin’s scroll into a lion rampant (the coat of arms of Brescia), and made intricate carvings on the

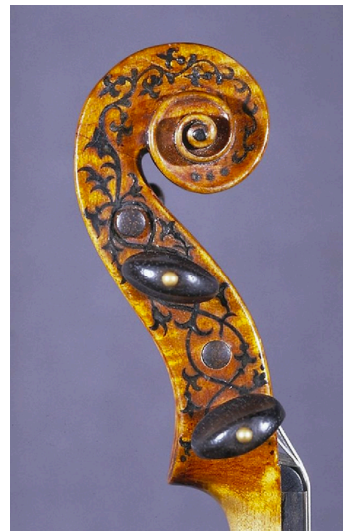
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<sup>20</sup> Owen Jander, “Doni, Giovanni Battista,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy: [www.grovemusic.com](http://www.grovemusic.com) (accessed 12 April 2013).

back (ca. 1640); Antonio Stradivari of Cremona added the Medici coat of arms and cherubic angels in mother of pearl inlay on the fingerboard and tailpiece (1690),<sup>21</sup> and Andrea and Giralomo Amati created beautiful color paintings on the violin's body for Henry the IV of Navarre and France (ca. 1595). All were ways of increasing the value and aesthetic desirability of the object. And then, a performer picks up the instrument and its accompanying bow, and it begins to sound.<sup>22</sup>

**Examples:**

**a) Top Left:** Scroll and Pegbox, Gasparo da Salo, (ca. 1640 [NEXT PAGE:] **b) Top Right:** Inlaid Scroll, "Greffuhle" Antonio Stradivari (1709), **c) Bottom Right:** Painted Back of the "King Henry IV," Amati Brothers (1595), **d) Bottom Left:** Inlaid Back, Gasparo da Salo, (ca. 1640)



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<sup>21</sup> We know that Stradivari created a matching set of violin-family instruments, however, the only surviving example in original condition is the tenor viola.

<sup>22</sup> By the early 18<sup>th</sup> century the bow became an artistic object rivaling the violin itself, with bow makers incorporating exotic materials such as gold, ivory, ebony, pernambuco, silk, and silver into its construction, in addition to careful scrim work and carving of the frog. For beautiful examples of historical bows see examples by Stephen Marvin of Toronto, ON: <http://www.historicalbows.com>, or Ralph Ashmead of Northern California: [http://www.ashmeadbows.com/bar\\_violin.htm](http://www.ashmeadbows.com/bar_violin.htm).



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The violinist stands in front of his audience, eyes closed. His theorbo player sits to his left, watching for the virtuoso to lift his instrument, the chitarrone balanced on his knee, its six-foot neck protruding into the air. The violinist at last lifts the instrument and places it on his shoulder, resting it on his collarbone, and then brings his bow, delicately held at the frog with gracefully curved fingers, into the air, hovering just millimeters above the strings of the violin. With a deep inhale, both performers' shoulders rise, they lift the necks of their instruments in the air, and the first note sounds. A warm, resonant D-major triad is strummed by the theorbist as the violin brings the bow, as if gravitationally pulled, down into the string, his right hand in slow motion drawing the stick in a perpendicular motion. We watch the amount of bow the violinist uses grow with the growing sound, as the first three notes of the sonata ascend to the e-string... Do-Re-Mi... The notes are simple, but the effect is grand. Each push and pull of the bow becomes larger, the sound resonating within the instrument and filling the room.

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Fontana stacks the deck in the violin's favor by writing his Sonata in a kind of Ionian on D, a loosely organized D-Major. D-major is surely the happiest key for the violin that exists; most of

the major violin concertos of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> and even 20<sup>th</sup> centuries would be written in this key. It allows all the open strings to ring sympathetically.

The Ionian mode is normally based on C, and as we saw in the first vignette, that is where a cornettist would probably play this piece, transposing it for technical/idiomatic reasons.<sup>23</sup>

Transposing this brightest and most open of modes up a step, Fontana capitalizes on the brilliance of the violin. If the player uses meantone temperament where the thirds and sixths would be pure in relation to the open strings, as Fontana himself very likely did, this makes the most out of the violin's resonant potential.<sup>24</sup>

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From there, begins a canzona, finding a steady meter and playing a steady, duple meter two bar stepwise figure, which the chitarrone repeats. Suddenly the long stretching lines have dissipated. The more animated musical movement seems to be choreographed by the player's flicking, dancing, hand movements. Even tiny turns of phrase, the violinist lengthening the lead in to the cadence to pass it to the chitarrone, are signaled gesturally, even with facial expressions. The violinist' elbow lifts then drops, lifts then drops, creating swinging motions in the air, as the bow darts from the middle to the tip and back again on every 8<sup>th</sup> note bounce. The violinist's arms and hands are actors, visually changing character, gesture and expression from one moment to the next: completely relaxed in one measure, suddenly springing to life in a flurry of excitement, changing to serene languor. For every sigh that emits from the instrument, every burst of passaggi, we see a counterpart in the spidery drumming of the left hand fingers and the quivering, pushing and pulling of the right arm.

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<sup>23</sup> Alexandra Opsahl, cornetto and recorder expert, personal interview, April 19, 2013.

<sup>24</sup> On an anecdotal note, this sonata, so saturated in really happy overtones, has helped 'open up' several very grumpy and non-resonant baroque violins. In my experience, Fontana's Sonata Seconda hasn't met a single violin it didn't like yet.

The spectator suddenly realizes, with a moment of pleasurable alarm, that there is nothing holding up the instrument itself but the violinist keeping it carefully balanced on his shoulder. All the while, the Theorbo player has been providing a barely noticeable harmonic cushion, providing subtle chordal support, while he, like the spectator, never looks away from the violinist.

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Fontana's characteristic bursts of "unprovoked virtuosity," often seem to appear out of nowhere, such as the spontaneous runs in the ends of bars 12, 13, and then the spectacular *passaggi* in bar 33. In performance these necessitate a flexible tempo to allow the violinist to make the most of the up-down-up-drop-down gestures. The variety with which Fontana mixes up different rates of musical movement is reminiscent of late division style; it gives his sonatas an air of *sprezzatura*—seemingly effortless virtuosic effects—which only makes them seem more marvelous. The way he uses the juxtaposition of smooth or slurred bow changes to immediately jumpy and active ones keeps us following the performer's every move, visually as well as aurally. While challenging the performer to yet greater subtlety, the violin can easily follow and accentuate all of the affective shifts, using the bow as the principal phrasing tool, making each one feel fresh and new. The amount of variance that a violin virtuoso possesses is what makes a sonata like this truly come to life. Even for the simple canzona motive, the violinist can choose among 10-15 different bowing decisions, each of which creates a different visual and aural effect.

Example: Partitura Score of Sonata Seconda a Violino Solo, mm. 1-51.

Sonata Seconda a Violino Solo.

7

34

6

3

Sonate Di Gio. Battista Fontana A 1. 2. 3.

D 4.



Another aspect of this entire holistic aural-visual spectacle is the face of the performer. Later in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, composers and performers such as C.P.E. Bach and Friedrich Marpurge wrote of the importance of facial expression as an aspect of great performance. String virtuosi, like keyboard players and unlike wind players, have their faces free to “emote” as they see fit through the piece. The “chin-off” technique common among 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century violinists (see **Glossary**) freed the player’s neck as well, allowing for an entire repertory of graceful gestural accents to the sound of the music, and more visual engagement for listeners.

The case of Fontana exemplifies the historical strangeness with which every performer who studies historical techniques learns to live: that for all of our “channeling,” the original performers

are long gone, leaving us to sift through the bits they left behind. Only in the case of Fontana, we had someone else start sifting for us.

### **The Case of the Re-incarnated Virtuoso: Giovanni Battista Fontana**

In 1641, just as the Venetian printing industry was beginning to recover from the decimation of the plagues of the 1630s, Bartolomeo Magni published a single *Libro di Sonate* of Giovanni Battista Fontana, native of Brescia, a violinist who had already been dead for over a decade.

Fontana's Sonatas were composed by a member of the first generation of virtuosic violinists, but by the time they were published, a new generation of violinists and violin sonatas held a much more elevated place of respect and importance within musical markets and communities. Fontana himself did not live long enough to see his sonatas in print, nor to enjoy that respect and importance, having died of the plague in 1630. His posthumous career would never have happened at all were it not for the enterprising *Maestro di Capella* at the Basilica della Santa Maria della Grazie in Brescia, Giovanni Reghino, who decided to publish the materials left to his Church by Fontana. Reghino wrote a dedication to Giovanni Maria Roscioli, *coppiero* (cup-bearer) at the time to Pope Urban VIII (Maffeo Barberini), and a member of the Pope's inner circle of trusted officials. It was an astute choice: Urban VIII was a great art patron, employing artists and musicians such as the sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini, composer Domenico Mazzocchi, the lutenist and composer Johann Kapsberger, and the poet Giulio Rospigliosi.<sup>25</sup> Rome saw a new resurgence in the arts as Urban established the Barberini Palace as a cultural center of Rome from the 1620's through the Pope's death in 1644.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Silke Leopold. "Rome: Sacred and Secular." *Music and Society: The Early Baroque Era*. ed. Curtis Price. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), 53.

<sup>26</sup> Andrew Dell'Antonio points out that the Barberini family in particular were influential in elevating and disseminating the new modern vocally driven musical styles coming out of

CANTO Primo.

# SONATE

A 1 2. 3.<sup>o</sup> per il Violino, o Cornetto, Fagotto, Chitarone, Violoncino o simile altro Istromento,

Del già M. Ill. Sig. Gio: BATISTA FONTANA,  
nell' eccellenza di questa professione Frà  
i migliori Ottimo.

DEDICATE

ALL'ILL.<sup>mo</sup> ET R.<sup>mo</sup> MONS.<sup>r</sup>  
ABBATE GIO: MARIA ROSCIOLI  
COPPIERO DI  
N. S. PAPA VRBANO VIII



IN VENETIA MDC XXXI  
Appresso Bartolomeo Magni. A

Florence in the early Seventeenth Century. Andrew Dell'Antonio. *Listening as Spiritual Practice*. (Los Angeles: University of California, 2010), 2.

<p>Il Sig. Gio: Batista Fontana da Brescia é stato uno de più singolari Virtuosi, c'habbia havuto l'età sua, nel toccare del Violino, e bene s'è fatto conoscer tale non solo nella sua Patria; mà &amp; in Venetia, &amp; in Roma, e finalmente in Padova, dove qual moribondo Cigno spiegò più meravigliosa la soavità della sua armonia. Questo Virtuoso, che nella voracità del contagio fù trasportato dalla terra al Paradiso, conoscendo [forsì] d'haver havuto il principio della sua meritata fortuna in questa nostra Chiesa delle Gratie, nel morire lasciò la medesima herede di quella facoltà, che co'suoi honorati sudori s'haveva acquistato, &amp; raccomandò á superiori del Monastero quelle fatiche, che lasciate in iscritto potevano, date alle stampe, farlo rissorgere alla cognizione de Musici con avvantaggio loro, &amp; eternarlo così nel mondo, come eternamente goderà nel Cielo.</p>	<p>The Master Giovanni Battista Fontana of Brescia was one of most singular virtuosos of his age to play the violin, and made himself well known as such not only in his homeland [Brescia]; but also in Venice, and in Rome, and finally in Padua, where this dying swan expanded yet more marvelously the sweetness of his harmony. This virtuoso, who in the voracity of the contagion [the Plague] was transported from earth to Paradise, knowing perhaps that he had made the beginnings of his deserved fortune here in this our Church of the Graces, in dying made that same Church heir to those goods which he had acquired through his honorable labors; and he commended to the Superiors of the Monastery those works left in written form that could, if printed, make him rise in the knowledge of Musicians, to his advantage, and thus make him as eternal in the world, as he will eternally enjoy Heaven.</p>
<p>Haveriano con prontezza gli Superiori pasato essequita la mente del Testatore; mà perche gli scritte [pativano] qualche difficoltà, e per la calamità de tempi andati non si poteva havere persona, che intelligente della professione, gli mettesse nel chiaro, chi richiedeva il bisogno per consegnargli allo stampatore, s'è differito, fino, che deposta la Carica del generalato dal Reverendissimo Padre Maestro Antonio Luzzari, &amp; eletto al governo di questo Monasterio, mi disse subito, che per ogni modo, Io, che tengo la cura di Maestro di Capella dovessi ritrovare, che ciò facesse; perche non voleva, che restassero più sepolti questi tesori, nel Sig. Gio: Batista privo della dovuta [lode].</p>	<p>The Superiors would have promptly executed the will of the deceased, but because the writings suffered such difficulty, and because of the calamities of those past times, a person educated in the profession [of music] could not be found to clarify them, which was required in order to consign them to the printer; so it was deferred until the Very Reverend Father, Master Antonio Luzzari, leaving his post as <i>generalato</i> and elected to lead this Monastery, said to me suddenly that at all costs, I, who have the charge of Maestro di Capella, should seek to have it done; because he did not want these treasures to rest buried, and Signor Giovanni Battista deprived of his due praises.</p>

<sup>27</sup> Translation by Elisabeth LeGuin and Lindsey Strand-Polyak

<p>Et m'aggiunse d'avvantaggio, che per assicurare quest'opera dalle punture, che gli potessero dare gli poco amorevoli, non potendo diffenderla l'Autore, la raccomandassi all protetione di V. S. Illustris.</p> <p>Alla quale è raccomandata con tanto suo godimento di [quiete] la Musica del Vaticano inchinata da tutte la altre: &amp; che lo cosi [haverei] e provveduto alla sicurezza dell'Opera, e nell'istesso tempo dimostrato à V. S. Illustris. Qualche segno di quella riverenza, che &amp; esso Reverendi. Priore, [ed'Io] le professiamo. Hò essequito il comandamento nelle prime parti colla stampa, &amp; adesso m'appresento à V.S. Ill. Per essecutione dell'altra, consacrandole questa fatica, e supplicandola á gradire in essa la virtu del Autore, &amp; unitamente la devotione de [suoi humilissimi] servitori, che implorando á V.S. Ill. quelle grandezze, delle quali per [anco] non possiede astro, che el merito con profondissimo inchino la riveriscono.</p> <p>Di venetia il primo Maggio 1641.</p>	<p>And he added helpfully that, in order to protect this work from the sniping of a few ungenerous souls, the Author being unable to defend it, I recommend it to the protection of Your Serene Highness.</p> <p>To which it is duly recommended, [and to] all [the] enjoyment of the Music of the Vatican, before which all others bow; and that this being done and the security of the Work being provided for, and at the same time demonstrating every sign of that reverence that the reverend Priors and I profess to you, I have completed turning over the first parts [of the publication] to the press, and now I present myself to Your Serene Highness for the completion of the other, consecrating this labor to you, and supplicating you to be gratified in it [by] the virtù of the Author, and along with it, the devotion of your most humble servants, who beg those greatneses of Your Serene Highness that as yet even the stars, making reverence before [your] merit with deepest bows, do not possess.</p> <p>In Venice, first day of May, 1641</p>
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Roscioli, following in the Pope's example, was also a patron of the arts, and owned a particularly large library of music books, with a significant number of volumes of new music from the 1620's and 1630's.<sup>28</sup> This may explain Reghino's plea that Roscioli himself defend Fontana's sonatas against any critics who might not love the music as much as he will. Reghino also suggests

<sup>28</sup> Nicoletta Guidobaldi. "Giovanni Maria Roscioli: un esempio di mecenatismo musicale alla corte di Urbano VIII." *Essercizi: Arte, Musica, Spettacolo* 6, (1983): 62.

that he hopes the music will bring enjoyment to the Vatican, hinting that Roscioli might present this work at the artistic center of the Barberini Palace.<sup>29</sup>

Reghino's appeals to Roscioli seek to associate Fontana with the protection and blessing of an artistic and fashionable Papacy; they also align his church at Santa Maria della Grazie in Brescia with the highest officials of the Holy See, elevating both Reghino's and Fontana's status in the eyes of the "world," (nobility, church officials and other musicians), who would be reading and buying this volume. Roscioli, too, stood to gain prestige by this acknowledgment as protector of the artistic heritage of a lost violinist, and promoter of the latest and greatest music being printed in Venice. We do not know whether or not this volume was indeed presented to the Pope or played within the Papal sphere, but Fontana's *Libro di Sonate* was still listed within Roscioli's personal library when Nicoletta Guidobaldi did her archival study there, nearly 400 years later.<sup>30</sup> Reghino's last paragraph also seems to suggest that there was more that could have been printed, as he mentions sending over the "first parts of the publication," but sadly nothing else was printed or managed to survive.

### **Publication as Posthumous Promotion**

In his dedication, Reghino explains that it took nearly a dozen years to bring this volume to print, due to the ravages of the plague, and to the presumed difficulty of the manuscript: apparently it was difficult to find someone qualified enough to be trusted with the editing of Fontana's manuscript. He mentions in particular the difficulty of the writing. We are left to wonder whether

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<sup>29</sup> "Et m'aggionse d'avvantaggio, che per assicurare questi' opera dale punture, che gli poessero dare gli poco amorevoli, non potendo diffenderla l'Auttore, la raccomandassi quiete la Musica del Vaticano inchinata de tutte le altre: & che lo cosi haverei e provveduto alla sicurezza dell'Opera, e nell'istesso te[m]po dimostrato a V.[ostro] S.[erenissimo] Illustris[simo] qual che segno di quella riverenza, che & esso Reverendis[simo] Priore, ed'lo le protessiamo." Giovanni Reghino, Dedication to Giovanni Battista Fontana, *Sonate a 1.2.3 &cet.* (Venice: Magni, 1641)

<sup>30</sup> Guidobaldi, 62.

this difficulty was due to the idiomatic nature of the music, or to bad handwriting: ‘perche *gli scritte [pativano] qualche difficoltà*’ could mean either “because the scripts presented such difficulty” or “because the things written presented such difficulty” It may have been the latter: Fontana’s music in general exhibits an often surprising rhythmic motion and energy, such as his use of septuplets in Sonata Seconda, unusual groupings of very rapid notes in Sonata Terza, and quick alternations between duple and triple figures in Sonata Sesta. Such unusual figuration was probably both difficult to read, and difficult to comprehend stylistically. Did Fontana’s manuscript originally include chords, as those of his contemporaries Biagio Marini (1626/9) and Carlo Farina (1626) did? We may never know, as the original manuscripts are lost along with almost everything else we know about Fontana.

Difficulty or not, either the musical editor (who is anonymous in Reghino’s dedication), or the typesetter for Magni, chose to present these sonatas in such a way that they were suitable for as many solo instruments as possible, perhaps hoping to garner broad interest, and an increase in sales. The published title page states that the collection is for “*A 1 2 3. Per il Violino, o Cornetto, Fagotto, Chitarone, Violoncino o simile altro istromento,*” and indeed these sonatas are playable (albeit with transposition) on any of these instruments. However, a look at both the Canto and the Partitura books reveals that only Sonata Prima is indicated for “*violino Primo o Cornette,*” while all subsequent sonatas, as well as the listing of the pieces in the *Tavola* (table of contents) in the back of the volume, list each sonata for *violino*, or *violino e Fagotto*.

This somewhat covert privileging of the violin is much more overt in Giovanni Reghino’s Dedication. He extolls Fontana’s “singular virtuosity” as a violinist. Of considerable note is that Reghino not once, but twice uses the word *Virtuoso* in reference to Fontana and his skill as a violinist: “The Signor Giovanni Battista Fontana, of Brescia, was one of the most singular *Virtuosi* who ever existed in this age, who had touched the Violin, and he was well known not only in his Country; but also in Venice, and in Rome, and finally in Padua, where like a dying swan he unfolded

most marvelously the sweetness of his harmony.”<sup>31</sup> This is certainly the first use of the term ‘virtuoso’ in reference to a violinist in a printed dedication page such as this one--but this is quite possibly because almost all dedication pages were written by the author himself.

Reghino also uses very flowery and descriptive language to persuade the reader (ostensibly the dedicatee, Giovanni Maria Roscioli, but also anyone purchasing these Sonatas) of Fontana’s semi-angelic status as a violinist, smiling down on his publication from heaven. Additionally, when Reghino recounts, “where this dying swan expanded yet more marvelously [*meravigliosa*] the sweetness of his harmony...” Note the use of the word *meravigliosa* here. The ultimate aim of musical works was to inspire one to experience this thrill of awe, and by pointing it out here, Reghino is privileging Fontana within the current aesthetics of the day. Reghino closes the first section of the dedication with the flowery image of Fontana deriving enjoyment in Heaven from his printed immortality on Earth.

All of this imagery of swans, virtuousness, heaven, Paradise etc. give a most other-worldly perception of the violinist, not unlike the period painting by Guercino of *St. Francis with an Angel Playing Violin* (Rome, 1620). From Reghino’s swooning comments we can almost imagine him in the role of St. Francis here, and Fontana serenading us from above.

**Example on Following Page:** Giovanni Francesco Barbieri “Guercino,” *St. Francis with an Angel Playing Violin*, ca. 1610-1660, Oil on Canvas

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<sup>31</sup> “dove qual moribondo Cigno spiegò più meravigliosa la soavità della sua armonia.



## SUMMARY OF THE DISSERTATION

In chasing these virtuosic ghosts, I've sought them out where they themselves spoke: their own words in dedicatory letters, the prints and manuscripts they left behind, and in anecdotes left by others. And it is in this that I have cornered them where we have a shared heritage: in the body of the violin itself. I too have felt the pleasure of a transfigured instrument glowing in the acoustics of scordatura. I haven't played for Emperors, but I know how scary it is to ascend to and descend from 10th position without a chin-rest, even if you're just playing in a room by yourself. I have heard the laughter of educated audiences as they recognize the fanfares of a trumpet in the D-major arpeggios of a *Tromba*, and I have held my bow on the string 4 seconds after the end of the piece, just to see how long I can make the audience *wait* and to discover if I have more. It is there I acknowledge that our shared heritage ends, but it is also in our mutual pursuit of that elusive mannerist mistress that our commonality begins. The seventeenth-century virtuosi did not try to be poets or biographers in

their display of *inventione*, but they left the guidelines of their work on the printed page, letting violinists of later *ingegno* try and discover what they meant.

In Chapter 1, I explore how Biagio Marini (1589?-1655?) in many ways seemed to have written the book on how to perform spectacle, and inspire meraviglia, as expressed in his Op. 8 Sonate (Venice, 1626/9). Marini exemplified the court-hopping entrepreneur of the early Seventeenth Century, bouncing from Brescia to Venice, Venice to Neuberg (and back again a few times), finally ending in Milan. In each case, Marini was treated as a being of exceptional virtuosity and even *virtù*, which earned him not only unheard-of privileges, but ennoblement and wealth. Marini definitively moved the violin sonata genre away from the flexible-instrumentation style of Fontana, into idiomatic specificity: putting the focus not just on the violin, but on the performing prowess of Marini himself.

In Chapter 2, I examine a violinist who in some ways is the antithesis of Marini, though no less successful in his way. Giuseppe Colombi (1635-1694), unlike the early 17<sup>th</sup> century virtuosi, never had to leave his hometown of Modena, instead fostering a close pedagogical relationship with his violin student and patron, Duke Francesco II D'Este. The Duke took power at age 14 and proceeded to keep promoting his court virtuoso for the next 25 years. Rather than engage in the politics of prestige virtuosic printing, Colombi became a *musico riservato*, creating and performing boutique spectacles of *ingegno* for the ennobled elite, most particularly his Duke, and leaving all his best works in manuscript. In so doing, he proved himself as virtuoso, while simultaneously helping the young Duke prove his noble worth as a man of *virtù* (virtue).

In Chapter 3, I re-trace the path of so many Italian virtuosi before me, and head north across the Alps, where the aesthetics of wonder were constructed similarly, but sounded remarkably different. I examine how Austrian violin virtuosi influenced the Italians by their use of pictorial and imitative music and their advanced virtuosic techniques. I then focus on one singular individual,

Heinrich Ignatius Franciscus Biber (1644-1704), who incorporated all of the virtuosic tropes into a symbolic enactment of faith and meditation in his *Rosary Sonatas* (~1676-1687?). Biber manipulates the inspiration of meraviglia to steer his audience toward the contemplation of the divine, while simultaneously performing his own form of spiritual exercise.

Finally, in Chapter 4, the violinist's idiom has come full circle. Here, I examine the exceptional life of Arcangelo Corelli, who more successfully than any virtuoso before him, bridged the divide between the virtuosic and the virtuous, achieving fantastic success as a performer, while utilizing the medium of print to present himself at the height of musical fashion. Corelli's consolidation of violinistic and compositional conventions sent the genre of the violin sonata into the eighteenth century *Galant*, setting the standard for the next 100 years.

From the near anonymity of Fontana to the international renown of Corelli, the solo sonata for violin shows how the violin virtuoso enacted a self-fashioned course of ascendance—absorbing, mimicking and recreating the new musical world around them with a commanding flexibility, which is not unlike that of the instrument itself.

## Chapter 1

### “*Meraviglia e Magnificenza:* Biagio Marini, the Spectacle Sonata, and the Rise of the Virtuoso”

#### Rarity and the Spectacle Sonata

“The Architect Buontalenti has managed to produce most abundant inventions, so that with a variety of machines that ascend and descend from heaven, and that go through the air and come out from under the stage, and with very frequent changes of scenery, he can show *il vivo suo ingegno* [his liveliness of invention], and at the same time can bring to the people of the audience both *meraviglia* and *diletto* [delight].<sup>32</sup>

Bastiano de Rossi’s praise of the architect Bernardo Buontalenti’s stage sets for the *intermedi* for *La Pellegrina* in 1589 finds an echo in violin sonatas from the 1620’s. These sonatas are of a special type I have dubbed the Spectacle Sonata. Each of these works are one-off’s, created as singular experiences. Like Buontalenti’s stage sets, they are full of ‘abundant invention,’ constituting a kind of sonic version of the ‘frequent changes of scenery’ that had so delighted and awed the public a generation before.

Among dozens of works, early seventeenth-century violinists crafted only a few Spectacle Sonatas, tucking them into collections of other kinds of instrumental music. In Marini’s Op. 8 (1626/9, Venice), Fontana’s *Sonate* (1641, posth., Venice) and Farina’s *Libro V* (1629, Dresden), the solo Spectacle Sonatas are set off, sometimes not even included in the regular part books, instead tucked into their own “partitura” books which included the solo and continuo parts in score, their

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<sup>32</sup> Bastiano Rossi, *Descrizione*, 5 (appendix 1a), quoted and translated in Nina Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court*, (Los Angeles: University of California), 34.

presence highlighted by being set off from the rest of the parts, yet obscured through their absence in the general partbooks. Only if one were dedicated and looking for these sonatas would one find them; and if one did, one would see they were given special attention by the composer.<sup>33</sup>

Treadwell comments on how solo singing was placed to achieve a similar kind of exclusive function in the scope of the *intermedi* of 1589: "Solo songs in fact made up a relatively small proportion of the musical numbers in the intermedi..., but they were strategically placed to produce maximum effect."<sup>34</sup>

This aspect of rarity and a singularity of experience is reflected in the number of sonatas included in each of these collections. (In all cases, what we have in print is the only extant work by these violinists). Biagio Marini includes only two solo spectacle sonatas in his Op. 8, the Sonata "variata" and the Sonata "con due corde." Of the twelve sonatas by Fontana published by Reghino in 1641, six are solo sonatas." Carlo Farina published only six solo sonatas among the five books that he published while in Dresden; he never published anything else once he left the German court.

*Meraviglia* meant these pieces had to be rare, singular experiences. This leaves us wondering: What didn't these artists choose to publish? Were there a few other fantastical gems left in manuscript, kept for only the patron's private experience?<sup>35</sup> Given the limits of print and the prevalence of ornamentation practices at the time, what else could these virtuosi add to the printed music that couldn't be made public by the printing press? It is a testament to this music's enduring ability to cultivate wonderment that almost 400 years later, we still postulate about what might have been, while at the same time, marveling at the invention present in the crumbs dropped for us to follow.

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<sup>33</sup> In many ways the Spectacle Sonata encapsulates the concept of *musica reservata*, where only a privileged few will find it. Incidentally, Marini will be given this title himself as *musico riservato* in Neuberg.

<sup>34</sup> Treadwell, 35.

<sup>35</sup> Chapter 2 on Giuseppe Colombi will suggest that this indeed might have been the case.

What made a Spectacle Sonata different and special? As far as its sound and musical structure, I contend that this genre deliberately invoked the concepts of *meraviglia* and *ingegno*, in a manner strongly analogous to the stage spectacles of the same era in Italy. In terms of the social relations it implied, the Spectacle Sonata similarly imitated stage spectacles by invoking the *magnificenza* of the patrons who made this music possible in their courts and, later, to a limited public through print.

The cultivation and creation of this patron and performer project entails a few different aspects. The first and greatest driving force behind all of this, is *Meraviglia*. It is the "wow" factor: the audience must be astounded or surprised in some way. This does not only come from a place of delight in something beautiful; it is also possible in the shock value of witnessing something grotesque, taken to a place altogether unexpected. The sense of *meraviglia* comes from that bolt of adrenaline to the system, of encountering something that was different from or beyond what you expected to experience.

*Ingegno*: Part of *meraviglia* in Aristotelian terms, it entails a recognition and curiosity of "how did they do it?" and a marveling at the skill of the executant. This aspect moves beyond the shock and feeling of wonderment at the experience, to a respect and awe for the performer/creator of that experience.

*Magnificenza*: This was the 'payoff,' as it were, for the patron: what he specifically got out of sponsoring spectacle, be it a stage show or a fancy instrumental performance. In Nina Treadwell's words: "The concept of *magnificenza* was closely linked to the issue of political legitimacy through precedence... [and] could also provide a rationalization for conspicuous consumption more generally [inspiring] ephemeral manifestations such as spectacles, feasts, and other displays through

which the prince asserted his public image."<sup>36</sup> Ephemerality was key: dramatic theorist Leone d' Sommi went so far as to suggest that after spending thousands of ducats on the *apparati* and sets for the *Intermedii*, Ferdinando di Medici's *magnificenza* was greater because he had them destroyed as soon as the performances were over.<sup>37</sup> The sponsorship of ephemera such as music was in fact a defining mark of a ruler's greatness.

One more element must be mentioned, one that was becoming increasingly important in the generations after the iconic *La Pellegrina* of 1589, and whose name does not need to be in Italian: *Publication*. The medium of print allows for this symbiotic relationship between patron and virtuoso to be broadcast in a more public arena. "Music—in its various functions as element of liturgy, ceremony or recreation—was intended to symbolize and represent the social status of the patron commissioning it."<sup>38</sup> Annibaldi states that for every musical commission of the time, there were three agents involved: patron, performer/composer and "the world"—broadly defined as the audience members who heard the performance of a new piece of music.<sup>39</sup> Annibaldi stresses that when a patron was paying for a new piece of music, he was specifically paying for the experience of the live performance, not lines and dots stamped on a page. But when that piece of music was then published, the patron of the musical publication was in a sense advertising his good taste and financial well-being, while simultaneously giving others a chance to copy him with their own musical forces.

Nina Treadwell provides another angle to this argument in her analysis of Bastiano de' Rossi's official written publication of Fernando di Medici's 1589 wedding and *intermedi* proceedings. "The

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<sup>36</sup> Treadwell, 15

<sup>37</sup> Treadwell, 15

<sup>38</sup> Claudio Annibaldi, "Towards a Theory of Musical Patronage." *Reverare* 10 (1998):173-174

<sup>39</sup> Claudio Annibaldi, Introduction to *La Musica e Il Mondo: Mecenate e committenza musicale in Italia tra Quattro e Settecento*, ed. Claudio Annibaldi, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1993), 19.

medium of print allowed Rossi to document details that were all but impossible for the spectator-auditor to retain in the rapidly evolving context of performance... By saturating his text with intricate description, the reader may have been pushed to experience something like the awe of the spectator in the performance context of the Uffizi theater during May 1589."<sup>40</sup> So, by analogy, we may imagine that nobility who published musical collections by their elite virtuosi presented a spectacle in print of the kinds of lavish displays they were able to enjoy within the intimate spaces of their courts. Furthermore, in regards to the Spectacle Sonatas, the unusual score format of their printing encourages this kind of voyeuristic reading.

**Example:** First two lines of Sonata Seconda from the “Partitura” book of Giovanni Battista Fontana, *Libro* (Venice: Bartolomeo Magni, 1641)



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<sup>40</sup> Treadwell, 16

All three of these elements, *Meraviglia*, *Ingegno*, *Magnificenza*, were replicated in the real-time experience of the court and then secondarily distributed for the literate and moneyed "public" to marvel at through the medium of print. I turn to a case study of Biagio Marini, who in many ways seems to have quite literally “written the book” on this kind of relationship, and on the display of virtuosity involved.

## **Setting the Standard of a Semi-Charmed Kind of Life: Biagio Marini**

### **Part I: Biography of *Cavalier* Biagio Marini**

Biagio Marini (1587-1655) had an adventurous and fabulous career. Through a curious paper trail, scholars such as Willene B. Clark, Eleanor Selfridge-Field and Roark Miller have put together an epic biography of a self-made man and violinist who embarked on a career of social ascendance. Marini was born in Brescia, the same hometown as Giovanni Battista Fontana, and a center of violin building. Although it is not unlikely that the two virtuosi’s lives could have overlapped in some way, we have no evidence of any of this.

By 1615 Marini was appointed as a violinist in the capella of San Marco in Venice, where he probably worked under Monteverdi. By 1620 he had moved back home for his first Maestro di Capella job at the chiesa di San Eufemia; he was also director of music for the newly formed Accademia degli Erranti. Shortly after, in 1621, he figures as a violinist at the Farnese court of Parma. This was followed by his first trip across the Alps in 1623, to the court of Duke Wolfgang Wilhelm, Count Palatine and Duke of Bavaria at the Wittelsbach court in Neuberg an die Donau, a town in what is now Germany, 60 miles north of Munich. It was there that he was appointed with the mysterious title of “*musico riservato*,” a title which has not been satisfactorily explained;

combined with the very special treatment outlined in his employment contracts, it seems that it was a very privileged place in court. As I will detail later, after Marini left in 1630, the Duke would take him back twice more in 1640 and 1644.

Historians have lost Marini's trail after he left Neuberg the first time. He may have been working in Bergamo and Milan; after another decade of migrating north, he touched down briefly in Milan to take a maestro di capella position; subsequently took positions in Ferrara and then Venice between 1651-1653; and finally took another maestro di capella position in Milan, staying there for the rest of his life, and dying at the respectable age of 76.

Marini appears to have been quite the showman, opportunist and self-promoter, as well as a virtuoso violinist. His published record presents a clear testimony of his virtuosity. Yet, from his biographical record, full of more than average court-hopping, and the anecdotal evidence of the diva antics he flaunted and got away with, we get the sense that Marini must have been someone that one had to experience live to fully appreciate.

From the outset, it appears Marini had his sights set on social ascendance. Roark Miller examines how Marini throughout his life revised parts of his own biography, for example intentionally indicating a later birthdate to suggest he was already working at Saint Mark's in Venice at the tender age of 15.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, his attempts to erase his humble past are evident in Marini's failure to acknowledge the existence of his commoner first wife, Pace Bonelli, in census documents from 1641, after he had re-married a *third* time to Margarita Taeggia, a woman of title, station and wealth.<sup>42</sup>

His desire for social advancement was supported by the fact that Biagio Marini seemed to possess what in the popular music industry today is nebulously called "star power," enabling him to

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<sup>41</sup> Roark Miller. "Dismissal but not disgrace" *Revercare* 9 (1997): 6. Roark reports that Marini occasionally under-reported his age by as many as sixteen years.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 15-16.

negotiate positions far above an instrumentalist of his station, and to receive benefits and privileges (and diva indulgences) rarely allowed to a lowly violinist. When he took the position in Neuberg, he was given the dual title of *musico riservato* and *maestro de' concerti*. Among the stipulations in his employment contracts were that he “should not be placed in the concerto grande where he cannot be heard well,” and that Marini “will have the opportunity to make known to his Highness when he should have his own works to perform and wishes to direct the music.”<sup>43</sup> Later, when Marini and the Maestro di Capella Giacomo Neri were having artistic differences, Marini made further demands, and received concessions, such as “that he [Marini] may not be ordered either in the church or in the court without the commission of his Highness...” and that only the Duke himself could tell Marini when and where he should be required to perform.<sup>44</sup> In 1623 Marini in a letter requested that the Duke pay for his housing, pay for his choir boys who came with him from Italy, and give him a raise. Shortly thereafter, in 1623, Wilhelm paid nearly the entire 4,000 Reichstaler price of Marini’s new house.<sup>45</sup> While it was not uncommon for musicians to take out mortgages from their employers in order to finance real estate purchases, Marini, it appears, never had to pay the money back. Structures of debt for German and Austrian musicians were common occurrences both in Neuberg and in Dresden, designed to keep the musicians and other court staff perennially in the debt of their employers and preventing them from leaving the court to take better employment contracts.<sup>46</sup> Marini, however, appeared to just walk away from his financial obligation to the Duke when he left Neuberg in 1628, and when he returned on two separate occasions in the later 1640 and 1644, no mention seems to have been made of the property. It is assumed that Wolfgang Wilhelm took

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<sup>43</sup> Willene B. Clark, *The Vocal Music of Biagio Marini*. PhD diss. (Yale University, 1966), 14.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 18. The letter is undated, yet because of its events that it references (including his housing, we can safely assume it was written between 1621-1623.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

<sup>46</sup> Gregory Johnston, “‘He subsists like a sow in a pig-sty’: Court Musicians and Strategic Debt in Seventeenth-Century Germany.” Paper presented at the National Meeting of the American Musicological Society, New Orleans, Louisiana, Saturday, November 3, 2012.

ownership of the property (since he paid for it), but the fact that Marini's debt was never used to keep him in servitude to the duke is remarkable.

Evidently the Duke was willing to forgive even more than financial foibles from Biagio Marini for fear of losing the virtuoso. In 1624, several court officials wrote to Wolfgang Wilhelm, who was away in Dusseldorf at the time, that Marini was neglecting his duties while the Duke had been absent: he was reported to have left the court entirely on trips, and to have neglected to give the choir boys their singing lessons. Wilhelm reproached the officials himself, advising that they tread carefully when negotiating with the violinist because he didn't want to "lose the pleasure in music."<sup>47</sup>

Marini left and returned to Wilhelm's court a total of three times, each time welcomed back to his post.<sup>48</sup> In return for the considerable liberties Marini took, the Duke not only co-sponsored the publication of his Op. 8 with Archduchess Isabella of Austria—a work which required the invention of new printing technologies—but even knighted him in 1626, so that Marini carried (and flaunted) the title of *Cavalier* for the rest of his life.

In 1652, when Marini returned to the capella at Saint Mark's in Venice, he negotiated a rate of 80 ducats a year for his services as a violinist and singer, a significantly higher salary than had ever been paid an instrumentalist in that position before.<sup>49</sup> Roark states that while finding a singer who could squeak out a few notes on an instrument was not uncommon, to find an instrumentalist who would squawk out a few notes as a singer was much more rare, and to pay him on the scale of a solo singer, unheard of.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>48</sup> Roark Miller, "Divorce, dismissal, but no disgrace: Biagio Marini's career revisited." *Recercare*, 9 (1997): 5-18

<sup>49</sup> According to Miller, the average income of a salaried musician at St. Mark's was 15 ducats a year. Miller, 8.

Even with this position and pay scale of note, Marini soon took up the position of *maestro di capella* at Santa Maria della Scala in Milan; he was dismissed at St. Mark's in 1653 after he skipped out on too many services there.

**Part II: Rosin Traces** —Marini's published *inventioni* in Op. 8

So what can the surviving music tell us about this “star power” that enabled Marini to live such a charmed life?

While none of Marini's manuscripts survive, we do have his publications. In light of the very privileged position he held in Neuberg, I am going to focus on Marini's Op. 8, published in Venice in 1626/9, and financed by the Duke. This collection featured some of the most adventurous pieces, from both a musical and a publishing perspective, of instrumental music that had been put to print yet by any composer. Additionally, it was one of the first instrumental music collections in which works are designated as being for specific instruments.

**EXAMPLE [Following Page]:**

Canto Primo title page from Biagio Marini's Op. 8 (Venice: Gardano, 1626/9)



Though Marini indicates that the Op. 8 collection is “*per ogni sorte d’Instrumenti*,” what is detailed in larger print below is a list of different kinds of *violin* sonatas. The front page reads like an advertisement for a mishmash of new, bizarre ways of experiencing violin playing. After listing all the kinds of dances, he then includes a second list complete with “A capriccio in which two violins sound as four parts, An ‘ecco’ for three violins, and some capricious sonatas in which two and three parts sound with one violin, and included with other curious and modern inventions.” (see the printed example for the original Italian) No mention is made of the fact that there are also works for bassoon or trombone, or theorbo, in the collection: just *violin*. Marini is showcasing himself, as not only a virtuoso violinist composer, but an *educated* virtuoso. He additionally lists himself as “ACCADEMICO OCCULTO GENTILHOMO”, a “gentleman academic of the Unknown.” This

odd designation marks him as a member of the “Accademia degli Occulti,” a literary society in Brescia founded in the mid sixteenth century.<sup>50</sup> Through this careful labeling, he figuratively places his own person and his instrument at the center of attention in the title page.

The use of the word invention/*inventioni* hints at the kind of spectacular display Marini puts forth in the musical pieces inside.<sup>51</sup> In addition, as an Accademico, Marini is directly aligning himself with the style of *la bella/nuova maniera*, or mannerism, which privileges the display and cultivation of the artist’s *ingegno* through their sense of invention in all things. Maria Maniates goes further in describing this: “Mannerist artists naturally consider themselves to be even more progressive insofar as they refine and elaborate the scientific achievements of the Renaissance to a startling degree of sophistication. For this reason, problem solving, which in the Renaissance was tempered by a desire to emulate the naturalism of classical art, becomes in Mannerism an art in itself; *effetti meravigliosi* leave naturalism far behind because artists strive to impress connoisseurs with the ingenuity of their invention of problems and of their solutions to them.”<sup>52</sup> Marini proclaims that his violin works are themselves examples of modern invention and a showcase of his own *maniera*.

Marini throughout Op. 8 is showcasing his *ingegno* through numerous *effetti meravigliosi*, enacted through the persona of the virtuoso violinist. In the “Sonata en ecco,” he presents the illusion of a solo violinist, while hiding two others offstage to create his echo effects, expanding boundaries of his listeners’ perceptions and the limits of the violinists’ own display of

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<sup>50</sup> There is historical discrepancy on when exactly the academy was founded (to make a bad pun, it is “unknown”). Some scholars insist on 1567, which would make sense for the 1568 Rime (discussed shortly) to be an opening publication. Others suggest an early date of 1553. See Evaline Chayes, “Language of Words and Images in the *Rime Degli Accademici Occulti* 1568: Reflections on the Pre-Conceptual,” *Language and Cultural Change*, ed. Lodi Nauta, (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 149.

<sup>51</sup> For Marini to even invoke the word invention in relationship to his musical pieces was to align himself with the poets and the literati, who associated invention with creation, a high designation usually reserved for poets.

<sup>52</sup> Maria Rike Maniates. *Mannerism in Italian Music and Culture, 1530-1630*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1979), 105.

inventiveness.<sup>53</sup> In the *Capriccio a due violini per sonar a Quattro* he turns the traditional canzona on its head by having two violins play four lines of counterpoint.

In the *Capriccio per sonare il violino con tre corde a modo di lira* (Caprice in which to play the violin with three strings in the mode of a lyre) Marini begins to demonstrate his idiomatic knowledge of the violin and his inventiveness in ways not obvious to the non-performer. He uses the free and whimsical mode of the capriccio to turn the violin into a lyre, the instrument of Orfeo. The bow strums sections of continuous triple-stop chords, alternating with more lyrical and melodic single-line sections.

At the beginning of the Capriccio there is a curious and mysterious performance notation: “Bisogna che le due corde grosse siino [sic] vicine.” (“It is needed that the two larger strings (i.e. the G and D string) be near [to each other].”) There is no other mention of what this means, or how the performer is supposed to execute this.

One possible explanation is literal: Marini intended the performer to alter his instrument, creating another notch in the bridge for the G-string close enough to the D string so that the violinist could saw away at all three notes without arpeggiating, as was a common practice when articulating triple-stops.<sup>54</sup> Leading modern-day Baroque violinists Stanley Ritchie (Indiana University) and Monica Huggett (The Juilliard School) teach their students that this enables a more literal imitation of a lyra-viol. Additionally, it showcases Marini’s *inventione* and *ingegno* by creating a piece that requires physical alterations to the instrument. One of the primary goals of *inventione* is the creation of singular experiences. The physical alteration of the instrument ensures that this is indeed quite literally the case for both performer and spectator, as the alteration to the violin would have to be undone in order to play anything else next!!

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<sup>53</sup> Ljubica Ilic, *Music and the Modern Condition*, (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2010). 38-44.

<sup>54</sup> Piotr Wilk. “The Violin Technique of Italian solo sonata in the 17<sup>th</sup> century” trans. Agnieszka Gaj *Musica Iagellonica* (2011): 206

The fact that he put such a singular, rare and slightly bizarre performance marking, whatever its meaning, further confirms Marini's *ingegno* and *inventione*, because the reader has to stare at the writing, puzzle over its meaning, and experience his own form of *meraviglia* and *diletto* that Marini would be so creative as to come up with such a thing. If indeed he figures it out, it would confirm the reader's own *virtù* of connoisseurship that he understood the marking at all.

Marini never utilizes the lowest string in any of the melodic passages in this sonata. He instead writes all of the melodic-line material on the upper A and E-strings, separating the sonic ranges and identities of the Lyre, which strums the lower three strings, and the Violin, which more lyrically sounds the upper strings. So, while the *Capriccio* is ostensibly about the conceit of a violin playing the part of a lyre, the lyrical sections remind you that this is just a performance, and that this is still indeed a violin—and that Marini the violinist is able to be master of all of it.

An important aspect of mannerist inventiveness was to place hidden meanings into texts, relying on the spectator's connoisseurship of these often classic references. The spectator/reader/listener was expected to understand the reference in order to fully "get" the point of the conceit. Marini's *Capriccio* could very well be a presentation of Marini himself and the violin as Orfeo, complete with the strumming of the lyre in the chordal sections, and the singing of the voice in the melodic writing. Orfeo was often portrayed with either the violin or the *lira da braccio* in paintings and etchings, and 70 years later Arcangelo Corelli himself would be declared the "Italian Orpheus".<sup>55</sup> This trope would have been well known among the elite Accademici. Combined with the additional conceit that Marini himself was also a singer and a composer of vocal music, this would have made a quite clever display of *inventione* indeed.

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<sup>55</sup> George Muffat, *Auserlesene Instrumental-Music*, (Passau, 1701), in Peter Allsop, *Arcangelo Corelli: New Orpheus of Our Times*, (Oxford: Oxford, University, 1999), 33

**EXAMPLE:** Cesare Gennari (1637-88), *Orpheus Playing the Violin*, seventeenth century, Oil on Canvas, (PD-1923)





**EXAMPLE:** Jan van Ossenbeek, after Leandro Bassano, *Orpheus Playing a Violin*, ca. 1656-1660, Woodcut etching printed on paper. © Trustees of the British Museum, used with permission

### Part III:

#### The Virtuoso as Spectacle in *Sonata Quarta: Per il Violino Per Sonar con Due Corde*

While Biagio Marini in his Op. 8 crafts pieces to overwhelm, such as the *Sonata in Ecco*, or to inspire amusement, delight and a touch of awe, as in the *Capriccio*, it is in the two longer Spectacle sonatas for violin, “Variata” and “con due corde” that he lets the sparks fly. It is one thing to amuse your audience with an imitation of a lyra for a minute, or to use two other colleagues to overwhelm your audience with echoes, but how does one channel all that energy into one single performer? That is the challenge that Marini sets himself in the solo violin sonatas, and where he displays true prowess as a creator of spectacle and a *virtuoso di maniera*. Nina Treadwell discusses this intersection

between virtuosity and meraviglia: "But the executant-- whether painter, writer, or musician-- had to have more than just the ability to render ideas with extraordinary clarity and precision. Supreme imaginative powers were needed, as demonstrated by Vasari's account of Leonardo's conglomerative "monster"<sup>56</sup> While through his other violinistic works we see glimpses of the range of his technical skill and his sense of compositional *ingegno*, it is when he sets out to create and develop a long soliloquy of virtuosity that we get a sense of the kind of "star power" that Marini might have had, that generated so many favors from his employers. By combining technical virtuosic prowess, dramatic affective juxtapositions and blurring the sectional nature of the canzona, Marini stages an assault upon the emotions in the pursuit of inspiring *meraviglia*.

### **Marini, Marino, Maniera**

As a member of the Accademia degli Occulti and later maestro de capella of the Accademia degli Erranti, both in Brescia, Marini would have been intimately aware of the aesthetics and trends of mannerism, not only in music, but in poetry and art as well.<sup>57</sup> One type of poetic mannerism in particular, despite being constructed of words, leaned far into the territories of wordless music, with little emphasis on the meaning of text, indulging in the sound and connotative powers of words. The poet Giovanni Battista Marino (1569-1625)-- one of the chief representatives of this style-- popularized this kind of sonic and sensual excess, which earned it the term *marinismo* among scholars and critics. Marino's poetry is marked by elaborate figuration, extreme and oppositional changes of emotions, uses of repetition, all elements which proved irresistible to musicians: his poetry was set to music over 800 times before 1650, making him the second most popular poet among composers behind Guarini, another mannerist poet.

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<sup>56</sup> Nina Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court* (Los Angeles: University of California, 2008), 33.

<sup>57</sup> Eveline Chayes, "Language of Words and Images in the Rime Degli Academici Occulti 1568" *Language and Cultural Change: Aspects of the Study And Use of Language in the Later Middle Ages And the Renaissance*, ed. Lodi Nauta (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 149.

### An Excerpt of “La Canzone dei Baci,” by Giambattista Marino

Tranquilla Guerra e cara,  
ove l'ira e dolcezza,  
amor lo sdegno, e ne le rise e pace;  
ove l' orier s'impara,  
l'esser prigion s'apprezza,  
ne men che la vittoria il perder piace!  
Quel Corallo mordace,  
che m'offende, mi giova;  
quel dente, che mi fere ad ora ad ora,  
quel mi risana ancora;  
quel bacio, che mi priva  
di vita, mi raviva;  
ond'io, ch'ho nel morir vita ognor nova

per ferito esser piu, ferisco a prova

This is peaceful warfare and dear,  
where anger is sweetness;  
love, disdain; and peace is found in fighting;  
where one learns to die,  
prizes being a captive,  
and enjoys losing no less than victory!  
That stinging coral  
that injures me also aids me;  
the tooth that time and time wounds me  
also heals me;  
the kiss that deprives me  
of life revives me;  
wherefore I, who through dying gain a life  
ever renewed

injure in battle so as to be injured all the  
more.<sup>58</sup>

One of the key elements of poetic mannerism was the *conchetto*, or conceit. In an academic setting, a poet might be given a topic of some kind. His skill would then be exhibited in the way he developed this topic, through rhyme, allusion, wit, description, or any other way in which he could display his command of language through the topic. An example of different kinds of *conchetti* can be found in the *Rime* published by the Accademia degli Occulti in 1568. In it was a series of engravings. Each was made up of an “impresa,” an image (often something quite bizarre), and its paired “anima,” or written motto. It was up to the learned reader to decipher the connection.<sup>59</sup> Poetic display then followed, with poems and prose, each developing the topic in a new or different way. All of this display was a printed example of what was supposed to be done *extempore*, or improvised, in normal meetings of the Academia. So, the *Rime* functions as a display of the prowess of the Academia’s members.

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<sup>58</sup> translation from: Roger Freitas, “Tranquil guerre e cara: Two musical Metaphors in the Cantatas of Luigi Rossi.” *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music*, 15:1 (2009).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 150-151.

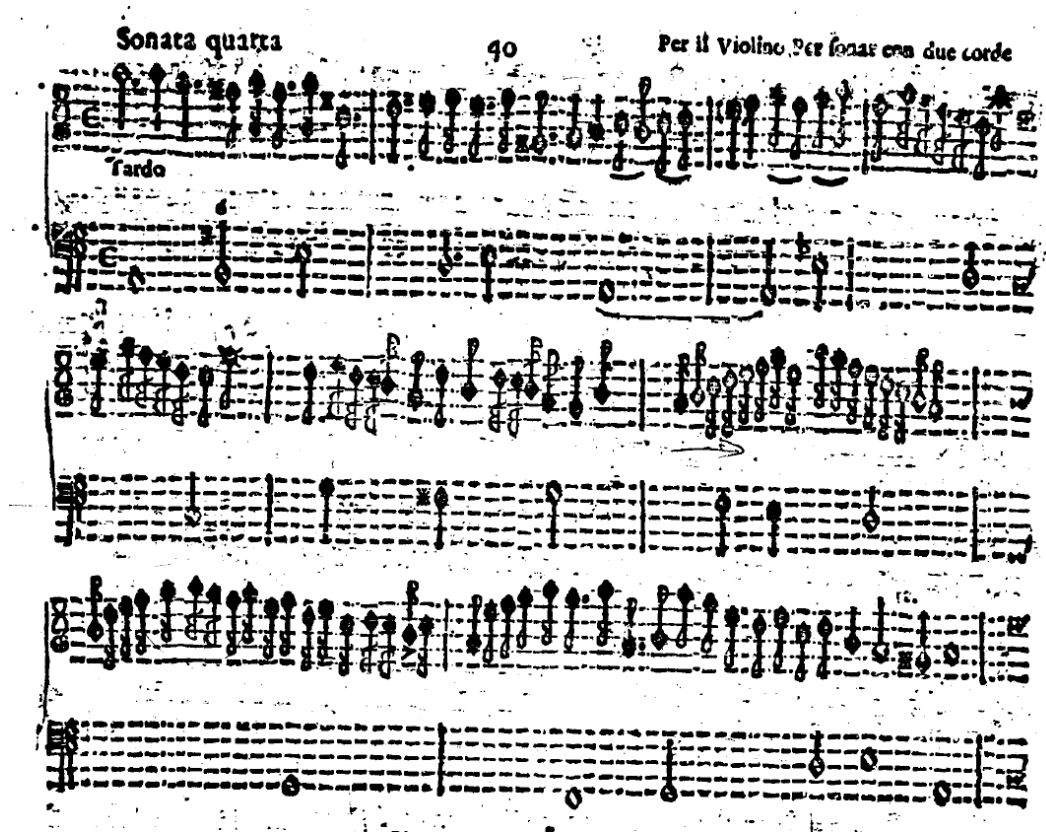
As a musician working for and within mannerist circles, Marini would have been intimately aware of all of these trends. I argue that in the “Sonata per sonar il violino per due Corde” Marini stages his own musical *maniera* in print, acknowledging and relishing that as a composer of instrumental music, his music is free of the constraints of text (and “meaning”). Marini gives us the *conpetto* of his title, and then proceeds to spin off his own decadent and indulgent display of his dolce maniera, leaving us to fully discover the connection and attempt to follow his twists and turns.

One assumption in presenting this kind of performance is that the listener knew the title of the piece, as the reader of the publication would. The visual *impresa* in the Occulti’s *Rime* carried the texted “anima” title, which was the key to deciphering the artist’s visual ingegno. It is not unlikely that the virtuoso in presenting his sonata would announce it the same way as mannerist poet would have announced the ‘anima’ before diving into his improvisation.

Marin’s *conpetto* of “per sonar il violino con due Corde,” might be interpreted by the listener as “with two strings,” a reference to a sonata sounding entirely of chords. However, it could also mean “with two strings,” as in, maybe Marini would be amazing his audience by performing the entire sonata only on two strings. However, Marini, confounding all expectations, does none of these things, and keeps it deliberately ambiguous, just like a good ‘anima.’”

Instead, the violinist inhales, and a cry of anguish emits from the open e-string, caught in slow motion as the bow is forcibly dragged across it, stretching time, without so much as an additional pulse or beat from the virtuoso’s lutenist and viol player to orient the audience. Then with another inhale, the violinist releases the bow’s tension into a series of jagged Lombard rhythms over a series of slow, dissonant steps: a minor second, a tri-tone, another minor second, and diminished seventh which limps into another minor second. Just when the listener expects a pause, the violinist pushes forward into a measured ascent, up to the e-string, then throwing it all away, beginning a jostling sequence back down, bouncing, then flying, in a flurry of rapid scalar flurries up and down

the A and E strings, and returning to the indignant insistence on the Lombard rhythms from the opening, which finally lead to a measured, guarded cadence on open A. Five separate ideas, each one building the rhythmic intensity and speed in different ways, each moving up and down within the hypodorian mode, spinning in ever accelerating circles. The listener is barely able to follow along with the rapid-fire changes and divisions the violinist makes, darting here, darting there, changing the rhythm—all within the first minute of music and packed into one single musical statement.



What's remarkable is not so much any one technical aspect of this opening, but that Marini sets up a set of limits: open A string to A on the E string (3<sup>rd</sup> finger on E to be precise), and then creates a kind of gestural slingshot of tension in the opening motive before letting it fly: pulling and pushing his audience through a set of expectations, giving us just enough to hint that he might stay with one idea, but then discarding it in favor of something else, building the overall rhythmic intensity before slowing it down again in order to let us down gently for the cadence.

The learned connoisseur catches a few kinds of figures that remind him of the kinds of things he has practiced on the viol, albeit much, much slower. This kind of variation within the simple scale degrees of an octave would have been par for the course for a virtuoso of Marini's level. Ornamentation and division work was a core part of any 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century musician's training. Everything from ornamentation treatises for gentlemen amateurs like that of Diego Ortiz's *Tratado de Glosas* (Rome: Dorico, 1553) for viola da gamba, to Giovanni Battista Spadi's *Libro de Passaggi Ascendenti et Descendenti* for vocalists or instrumentalists (Venice: Vicenti, 1624) and even "how to play the violin" treatises by Gasparo Zanetti (Venice: 1645) were filled with *hundreds* of ways to get from one note to the next. It wasn't about whether or not he could play a scale, but how long a violinist could keep his audience interested in *how* he played that scale.

The connoisseur notices that there is no music stand for the virtuoso. Could he be extemporizing now?

In the next phrase, the violinist, after taking a full inhale, lifts his bow back to the string. Again, the listener hears the slow bare open E string. The violinist leans into it to swell slightly on the note as it lifts on the fourth beat—and then again, more cascading, more swirling in place. While below, the basso continuo duo steadily leads the violinist through a simple sequence, hinting at the circle of fifths. Above all, the listener hears the dramatic changes in register: high-low-high-lower—not as high-lower-higher etc.. All the listener sees is flying fingers, the violinist's right arm slashing through the air vigorously like an expert swordsman. Lightning changes of motion, of direction, disrupted feints at coherence; finally fluttering away again in a last sequence of descending scales before again cadencing on the open A string. The listener sighs at the relaxedness of the open string cadence.

Both times, the violinist started slow, and then began changing his tactic, accelerating, varying, slowing, throwing his audience off, only to bring them back at his pauses. Two minutes in, and the virtuoso has displayed everything and nothing, showcasing all four strings (not the two we might have expected), the range of his instrument, how fast and how slow, making it appear as if he was just letting the sparks fly in an improvisatory manner. And yet somehow the basso continuo at least knew right where he was going.

Quintilian points out, “What pleasure can an orator hope to produce, or what impression even of the most moderate learning can he make, unless he knows how to fix one point in the minds of the audience by repetition, and another by dwelling on it, how to digress from and return to his theme? It is qualities such as these that give life and vigor to oratory; without them it lies torpid like a body lacking the breath to stir its limbs.”<sup>60</sup> While Quintilian’s principles of classical rhetoric in many ways were in direct opposition to the principles of mannerism, there are still classic tactics which can be applied, if only to lead the listener on long enough to then confuse them. Marini in this opening gambit reinforces principles of repetition by starting with similar gestures in the first and second phrases, and briefly retouching the Lombard rhythms in the end of the second phrase; but throughout, he then breaks with our expectations, mixing up the figuration, fooling the audience, in case they thought they could predict what he was going to do next. These thwarted promises set up and prove to the audience that Marini’s twists and turns are worth listening to, but only if we are to be alert to his every move, showcasing his *bella maniera* with every surprise.

The violinist furrows his brow and energetically cues his continuo by lifting his scroll, and the third phrase begins, with slow, triumphant, fan-fare like major chords, proudly heralding a change in affect, harmony and texture. The rhythmic and harmonic instability, the improvisatory feeling is suddenly gone. This the musicians must have rehearsed before. The listener’s eyes dart

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<sup>60</sup> As quoted and translated in: Judy Tarling. *Speaking with Quintilian: Text, Voice and Performance*. (St. Albans, UK: Authorhouse, 2009), 53.

about the room to see if another violinist has entered (this being a trick Marini had played on his listeners in another recent performance), but he then realizes that the violinist is actually playing the chords himself. In a steady rhythm and proclamatory, pointedly slow nature, the violinist heralds his own virtuosity with a series of double-stopped thirds, slowing down the rhythmic motion to allow the listener to take note of how exceptional this is.

But no sooner has the spectator been given time to admire, than the violinist begins to deviate from the pattern he has established, not content to give us the same thing twice. Some ten seconds in, the violinist begins playing along with the marching continuo line, while still holding a sustained note on top. The listener wonders: how he is hearing detached notes while by looking at the violinist's bow it seems that he hears separated bass notes).<sup>61</sup> How is this possible? But before he can figure it out, the violinist has cadenced with a fantastic double-fingered *grosso* figure.

The listener is already impressed, but Marini doesn't even pause before pressing forward into the next phrase. The violinist begins exchanging contrapuntal lines on two separate strings, using carefully weighted bow strokes to give the illusion that two separate voices are sounding. The listener focuses, fascinated, on the violinist's left hand as his fingers squirm, hopping between strings, squaring off fingertips to brace between the strings, index finger scrunching behind middle finger, ring finger dipping down to the second finger position to cover a leap of a tritone, repeating over again, until as if reaching a clearing, the violinist returns to orderly parallel thirds and sixths on the lower G and D strings, filling the instrument and the room with boomy resonance, lingering on a suspension, and closing the section on a perfect G-octave, letting the simplicity of the pure interval

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<sup>61</sup> While the listener above will not know the secret of Marini's dual-textured counterpoint, the reader of this dissertation will get the answer revealed: the technique that Marini indicates involves a subtle lifting and re-applying the bow to the lower string: giving the aural illusion to the listener that they are hearing both a sustained note on top, and separated notes on bottom. This technique would be most prominently used in the Andante movement from J.S. Bach's Sonata no. 2 for unaccompanied Violin, BWV 1003.

hang in the air and fade away. The virtuoso almost lets a small smile sneak into the corners of his mouth, but his bow stays on the string in perfect stillness.

He's not done yet.

The listener wonders in amazement: What is the violinist possibly going to do now? And wasn't this the sonata 'per due corde'? It seems that Marini has used the *conchetto* of the *due Corde* as the MacGuffin,<sup>62</sup> heightening his audience's expectation as they listened, to be astounded and delighted at how he presented or withheld them. The connoisseur muses that maybe Marini will have some chordal *effetti* even more marvelous in his fingers: perhaps heralding the end of the piece, Marini will create some harp effect, or maybe more trumpets?

Instead, Marini swoons, dramatically changing direction yet again, dribbling through one languid moment of repose to the next, drawing his audience in. Then, without warning, burst forth with presto, pointy sequential scalar passages, placing the high points erratically in a halting-sprinting game, collapsing again into swoons and sighs, finally spilling into a moment of complete free repose.

Here, the violinist seems to have reached an eye in the storm, where the dust settles for a moment. The listener doesn't know this, but Marini has marked in his own score "affetti." There is consensus in early music scholarship that this may mean some sort of bow vibrato, but an indication as broad as this should mean different things to each performer. (Affetti means literally "affects" or "states of being." Imagine reading the words "emote!" written in a modern piece of music, and how everyone would then puzzle over what kind of 'emoting' this called for). Something so texturally and gesturally bare (the score indicates hanging, wandering white notes in both continuo and violin) would suggest some sort of internal, almost meditative kind of state of being. Variations in bow

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<sup>62</sup> Coined by Alfred Hitchcock, a MacGuffin is: "In a film (now also in a novel or other form of narrative fiction): a particular event, object, factor, etc., initially presented as being of great significance to the story, but often having little actual importance for the plot as it develops." *The Oxford English Dictionary*, www.oed.com. Marini uses the concept of *con due corde* to drive and effect the viewer's and listener's expectations for the duration of the piece.

speed and pressure could make the tone pulse and quiver like a heartbeat, or like a voice rendered tender by deeply felt emotions. Employing a left-hand vibrato instead could mimic a human voice softly, wistfully singing. In either case, it is left up to the violinist to quiet the busyness of both hands and arms, leaving the flashy virtuosity aside for a few moments, descending into stillness, and seducing his audience by suspending a sense of temporality, meditating on timbre, tone and interiority.

The connoisseur watches as the violinist closes his eyes, leaning his head down onto his violin, an aural Narcissus seemingly losing himself in his own sound. The listener responds in kind and closes his eyes in pleasure, feeling his body relax with the honey tones of the violinist's velvet sound as he slowly comes to a close.

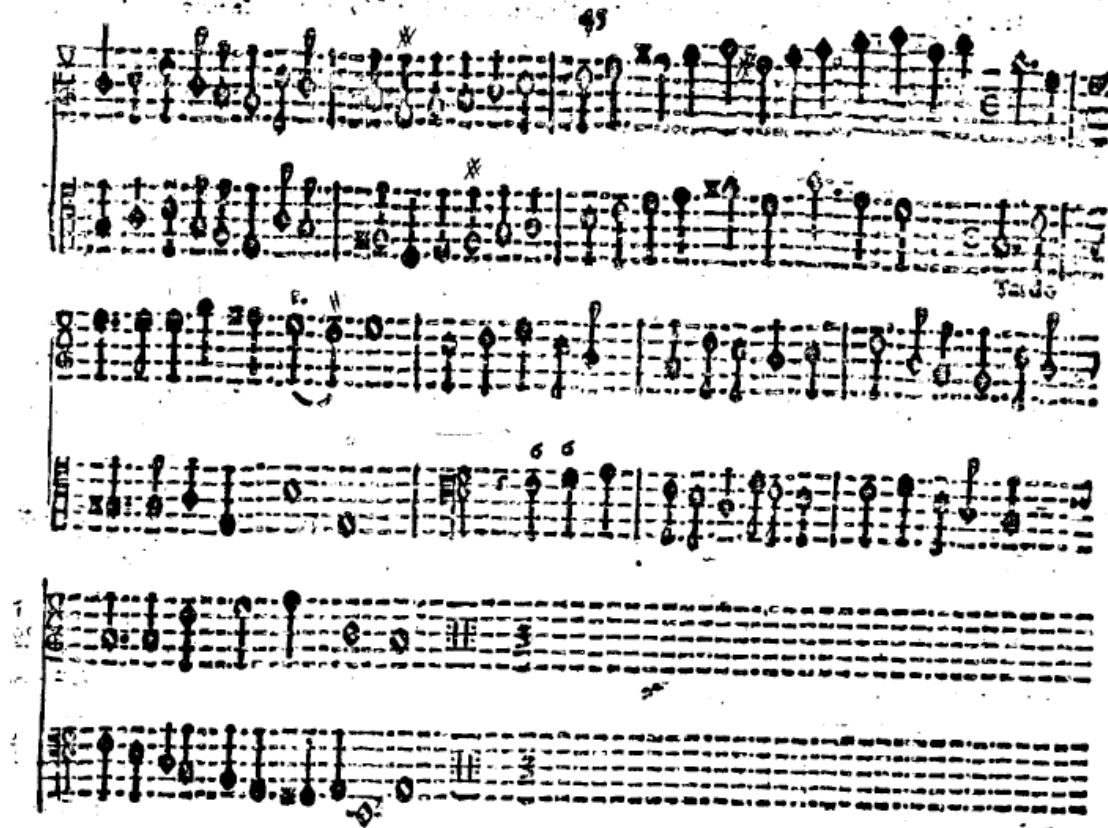
Suddenly, the violinist with a sharp, effortful breath switches back from *affetti* to *effetti*, and resumes taunting, delighting and surprising his listeners. They tap their toes for a brief triple meter dance as they watch the virtuoso hop around all four strings of the instrument. They reel back and are carried with him as he again swoons and quivers. The connoisseur smiles knowingly as he recognizes, after nearly five minutes of relentless surprises, the steady, spritely tempo and energy of a *canzona* motive, and then nods approvingly as he hears the violinist using the various timbres of the violin to give the polyphonic illusion of passing the *canzona* motive to multiple instruments (yet never passing it to the continuo!). Marini has seemingly limitless ideas that fascinate him, and no sooner than he begins one, he decides on another just as quickly. Finally, after a reeling, disorienting and dizzying array of slurring about the instrument, the virtuoso at last arrives at a fantastic flourish-filled *grosso* cadence.

The violinist catches his bow in the air, holding it motionless. And then he looks at his continuo duo, and unexpectedly, before the listeners can applaud, the viol player gives the cue, and begins a slow, gentle, circular dance melody. The listener's eyebrows raise in surprise as he slowly

exhales in delight at the lulling triple meter lullaby. Marini then takes over the melody, connecting each silken bow to the next in a creamy, dreamy texture. Then finally viol-player and violinist join in together, two voices sweetly playing an equal duet in parallel thirds, *due instrumenti di corde*, bringing this spectacle to a tender conclusion. The listener smiles in recognition of two strings, sounding together—the sweet, unexpected pun of Marini's *concerto*.

**Example [Following Page]:** mm. 127-158 of *Sonata per sonar il violino con due Corde*. Passage begins at the third bar in, marked metrically in 3-2.

This image shows a page of handwritten musical notation, page 56. The page contains ten systems of musical staves. Each system consists of two staves, likely representing a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The notation includes various note values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes), rests, and clefs. The first system begins with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. The notation is dense, with many notes and rests. There are some markings above the notes, possibly indicating dynamics or articulation. The page is numbered 56 at the bottom center.



Throughout the entire “Sonata con due corde,” Marini fashions himself as *Marini di Marinismo*, taking his listeners on a tour of texture, timbre and turns of phrase. He makes the most of every moment, treating each new section like a new *impresa* to develop and explore. He plays with turns of phrase, creating and thwarting expectations of what’s to come, plays with dramatic affective shocks to the system, and then moments of complete and utter indulgence in the sound of sound. At the end, although at some level the connoisseur may understand what Marini has done, the educated audience is left with the overall sense of breathlessness, not sure what they just encountered, but thrilled to have had the opportunity to witness the performance.

It is this command of dramatic timing, affective variance combined with Marini’s technical skill that makes his Sonata a violin-centric marvelous roller coaster ride, one that demands that the listener attempt to predict what the *Cavalier virtuoso* will bring forth from his violin next. The

listener's *diletto* derives partially from the illusion that the virtuoso seems to be improvising, but with moments of total and utter technical clarity and precision, seemingly always linked around the *concerto*, making Marini a master of *la bella maniera*. His inventiveness, making use of every sonic capability of the violin, combined with his *ingegno* of affective delivery, creates the *meraviglia* for the listener.

### Part III: Patron, Performer and Publication

*“To nel tradurla ho tenuto quel modo, e servato quell'ordine, che mi e paruto piu convenevole alla materia: non gia redendo parola per parola, (come usano di far molti, che poco intendono) ma si den isprimendo, e illustrando i sensi, e i concetti dello Auttore, con quella maggior fedelta e facilità che ho potuto.”<sup>63</sup>*

*[In translating [this work] in I held to such style and order as I judged more appropriate to the material: I was not rendering it word for word (as many have done who understand little), but in expressing, and illustrating the sense and the conceits of the Author, with the most fidelity and ease that I could]*

Biagio Marini, virtuoso performer, managed to inspire such *meraviglia* in his patron Duke Wolfgang Wilhelm through his performances of violinistic spectacularity, like the “Sonata con due corde,” that he was granted unprecedented favors and allowances. The rarity of the Spectacle Sonatas kept this particular kind of performance new, surprising and inventive. In turn, Wilhelm Wolfgang was able to increase his own noble *magnificenza* through keeping such a talented virtuoso in his retinue. Italian musicians in particular had a high level of cultural cachet in Northern Europe, which worked to a mutual advantage for both performer and patron. The Duke displayed his noble *virtù* through his knowledge and appreciation of such talent, and Marini got the mortgage for his house paid off and was knighted.

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<sup>63</sup> From Alberto Lollio's Dedicatory letter to Federico Bodoer, preceding the translation of Francesco Barbaro: *Prudentissimi et gravi documenti circa la elettio della moglie* (Venice, 1548), Aiii-Aiiii.

Yet for both parties, this private court contract wasn't enough. And this is where the medium of publication and print enters. For Duke Wilhelm Wolfgang of Neuberg, it was important to increase his own *magnificenza* beyond the small scope of his northern court, and this involved getting the wider 'world' to know about it. Likewise, for a socially ascendant virtuoso violinist like Marini, merely keeping his own spectacular flights of fancy in manuscript wasn't going to satisfy his ambitions. A published collection of sonatas displayed to the largest imaginable group of wealthy and/or artistic people what he, Cavalier Biagio Marini, was capable of.

A publishing contract with Bartolomeo Magni of the Gardano Press in Venice was acquired. With the Gardano Press, one of the oldest and most prestigious presses in Venice, the main hub of 17<sup>TH</sup>-c. music publishing,<sup>64</sup> Marini couldn't have hoped for better. 'Was acquired' may sound nebulous, but as with everything with Marini, the case was not straightforward. It appears that the 30 Years War began to take its toll on the Neuberg court, including the Duke's patronage of Op. 8. So, Marini, sensing a change in the winds, appealed to royalty one level higher up: Isabella Clara Eugenia, Infanta of Spain, and Archduchess of Austria. While the title page proudly declares Wilhelm on the cover as Marini's patron and employer, therefore attributing to Marini their joint success in self-promotion, the dedicatory page figuratively humbles Marini's muse in front of the Princess.

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<sup>64</sup> Richard J Agee. *The Gardano Music Printing Firms: 1569-1611*. (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester), 1998.



MÆ  
**S E R. P R I N C I P I**  
**ISABELLÆ CLARÆ EVGENIÆ**  
 H I S P A N I A R V M I N F A N T I,  
**A R C H I D V C I A V S T R I A E &c.**  
 Dominae suae Clementissimae.



**Vix se se intra dum pareretur continuit Musa hæc mea, Princeps Serenissima, cum Serenitatis Vestrae dextram adamare continuo cœpit, a qua clementissimè tolleretur. Fnim vero meminit senò vnam hic Praxillam aliquam, sed doctissimam adeo se-perturam esse Cornificiam, eò magis, quò non multo ab hinc tempore Bruxellis, Vrbe, cui vel Athenæ inuiderent, ad fides meas coram Serenissimis auribus chorum egit, atque adeo placuit, vt me & donis, & honore nimium quantum adamare Serenitas Vestra non dubitauerit. Inde vt aliquod saltem gratitudinis argumentum daret, in Serenitatis Vestrae sinum se se condere voluit, vt duo faceret in compendio: & grates daret, & tutum sibi asylum quereret. At ego me hic in Serenitatis Vestrae laudes effundere non volo; haberent enim, quod non ego tantum, sed crinitus etiam Iopas, aut Philamon ipse laboraret. Viuat orbi Belgico diu superstes Vestra Serenitas, in cuius clientelam me vnà & Musam hanc meam abycio. Neoburgi Kalendis Iulij 1626.**

Her most Serene Highness  
 Isabella Clara Eugena  
 Infanta of Spain  
 Archduchess of Austræ etc.  
 Her most merciful ladyship

Scarcely had my Muse herself and I joined together in obedience, Most Serene Princess, when Your Serenity [lit., Your Favor] began forthwith to embrace us with love, lifted up by the most merciful stream. Certainly one remembers the profit made here to a great extent by one Praxilla [an ancient poet who supposedly invented meter], but the most learned Cornificius' [author of a treatise on rhetoric] was to undertake to be learned, therefore to a greater extent, in that place which at that time Brussels, Rome, or Athens envied, from my loyal heart, a choir of gentle breezes goes to Your Favor, and also I undertake to please you, so that myself and the gift and the honor to love so greatly, as great as Your Favor, cannot be doubted. Thence one gives at least some proof of gratitude, which Your Favor herself wished to be made, so that the two would make a profit; and give thanks, and one would have safe asylum. Yet I myself do not want to squander praise of Your Favor; indeed, they have, because I am not so great, but almost as long-haired as Iopas [a character from the Aeneid; entertains the guests at Dido's banquet], or else Philamon [character from Ovid, associated with hospitality] himself will

be in distress. May the world of Delgico long outlive Your Serenity, in whose service only myself and my Muse are humbled. Neuberger, July 1626.

Dedicated to Your Favor  
Blasius Marini<sup>65</sup>

The Archduchess and Duke Wilhelm were luckily on the same sides in the war, and there were amicable relationships between the two courts. It appears Marini may have even sneaked off to perform for her while Wilhelm was in Dusseldorf, the same summer that Wilhelm's clerk tattled on Marini's job performance, and the same summer in which Wilhelm didn't care.<sup>66</sup> Considering Marini's past and future court-hopping, it is unsurprising that even in this co-presentation with the elite nobled class, he is still reaching for the next tree branch.

Marini had the support of his patrons to finance a very idiomatic, unusual, and therefore expensive piece of printing. In most instrumental music, a composer sought to create music for as wide an audience as possible. But here, in Op. 8, Marini is intentionally exclusive, narrowing from 'ogni sorte di strumenti' down to just one instrument, and then introducing unheard-of technical innovations for that instrument. Allsop, Apel and Tarling all point out that if one examines the print of the Sonata con Due Corde, it's possible to see the individual new wood-blocks. There literally didn't exist printing blocks for the sonorities that he used, because no one had ever tried to print them before, so for each individual chord, a new block had to be cut, adding expense to the production.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Translation by Gillian Gower

<sup>66</sup> This dual patron address may be part of the reason why the strange year is given of MDC. XXVIII (1629), when the opus was actually printed in MCD. XXVI (1626) to match the date printed in the dedicatory page.

<sup>67</sup> Peter Allsop, 'Violinistic Virtuosity in the Seventeenth Century: Italian Supremacy or Austro-German Hegemony?' *Il Saggiatore Musicale*, III 1996, 233–258.

Example: Chordal section from *Sonata Per il violino Per sonar con due corde*

The image displays a musical score for a chordal section from a violin sonata. It consists of three systems of music, each with two staves. The notation is dense, featuring many chords and melodic lines. The first system has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The second system has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The third system has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The tempo markings 'Tardo' and 'Presto' are visible in the third system. The score is written in a historical style, likely from the 17th or 18th century.

A publication like this would have been particularly costly; to intentionally spend more money for a publication that would appeal to *fewer* people, not more, suggested a high degree of *magnificenza* indeed.

Additionally, the solo sonatas themselves are set up in score, allowing a purchaser of this volume to read, like a book, the kind of *ingegno* that Marini displays, discovering the secrets of the idiomaticism of the *Capriccio*, and the unexpected duet at the end of *Due corde*. The *magnificenza* of this kind of limited-audience printing turns Op. 8 into a Spectacle in Print, allowing the reader to

have a voyeuristic view into the kinds of spectacle put forth at the Neuberg court. Rather than having to find a performing partner and learn to play the parts, a wealthy connoisseur (and thus to the adventurous Marini, a potential employer) of instrumental music could scan the score and experience *meraviglia* at Marini's skill.<sup>68</sup>

By the time Marini left Neuberg due to the mounting financial difficulties of the 30 Years War, he was newly knighted, with several high-profile publications in print, and his fame was such that it is not so surprising after all that he should return to St. Mark's as one of the highest paid instrumentalists. In any case, the mutual benefits of the virtuoso-patron relationship meant that, no matter how long Marini had been away, the Duke Wilhelm Wolfgang always welcomed him back.

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<sup>68</sup> The argument can certainly be made that this style of writing is helpful for the continuo player as well, as the Spectacle Sonata can turn into a "butterfly net" sonata, with the violinist flitting about and the continuo vainly trying to catch them. However, considering this problem exists when there are two fiddles as well, and the score setting is not given in this context. A similar kind of setting is presented in the posthumous book of Sonatas by Fontana, also printed by Magni, in 1641. In that volume, Magni gives each partbook (canto 1, basso continuo) their own separate partbook which is not in score, and then includes all six solo sonatas in score form in the separate *partitura* book. No other sonatas of the 12 are given such treatment. Alternatively, score printing may not even have been meant for performance at all, as the scores are often as many as 6-7 pages long... much too long for even a modern music stand!

## Chapter 2:

### *Virtù e Virtuoso:*

The Public and Private Spectacles of Giuseppe Colombi in the Modenese Este Court

“After Marini and Grandi the Italians mysteriously cease to write double stops for approximately fifty years.” –David Boyden, *History of Violin Playing*<sup>69</sup>

“But just as however robust it is a man’s body may fail when seeking to accomplish some task, so although the potentiality for the virtues is rooted within our souls, it often fails to develop unless helped by education. For if it is to pass to actuality and to its full realization, it cannot, as I said, rely on Nature alone but needs the assistance of skillful practice and reason...” —Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*<sup>70</sup>

The Biblioteca Estense in Modena, Italy, houses the one of the largest major collections of manuscripts and sketches of seventeenth-century instrumental music in the world.<sup>71</sup> The uniqueness of the repertory contained in the library gives us a rare peek into what has been long written and hypothesized about by scholars: that which preceded print. While prints are often pristine copies and provide information about what was put forth for more widespread consumption, we expect to see manuscripts and sketches to show signs of use, bearing physical traces on the page made in composition, rehearsal or practice. And of the hundreds of instrumental pieces in the manuscript

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<sup>69</sup> David Boyden, *History of Violin Playing*, (Oxford: Oxford University, 1990), 131

<sup>70</sup> Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. George Bull. (London: Penguin, 1967), 291

<sup>71</sup> See Piero Lodi. *Catalogo delle opere musicali. Città di Modena. Biblioteca Estense*. (Bologna: Forni, 1967).

collection at the Biblioteca Estense, virtuoso violinist Giuseppe Colombi is the most represented composer by far, with 27 books of manuscript music preserved. This material points in several different ways to the issues of spectacle and virtuosity in seventeenth-century Italy.

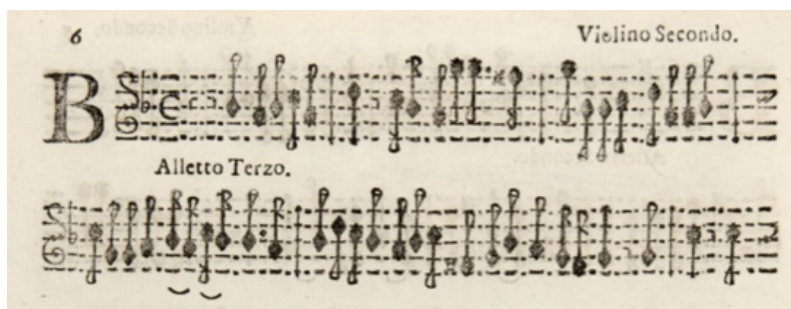
Colombi's written record is unique in more than one way. The music in manuscript and the published music are entirely separate repertoires. Even more strikingly, Colombi had distinct audiences in mind for these two classes of compositions.

## PUBLISHED WORK

It appears Giuseppe Colombi wrote only instrumental music, and overall, his published output is unremarkable in terms of the history of virtuosity in print. For the *cittadini* (wealthy non-nobility), members of other courts, and fellow musicians, Colombi published four *Opera*, consisting of dance music and sonatas for 2-5 players, mostly violins and basso continuo.<sup>72</sup> These works were published in Bologna by the printers Giacomo Monti and his son Piero. His printed sonatas are relatively straightforward, without double stops or virtuoso flourishes, and are often grouped in 'da camera' suite forms. [see below]



<sup>72</sup> John Suess, "Giuseppe Colombi's Dance Music," *Marco Uccellini*, ed. Maria Caracia Vela and Marini Toffetti, (New York: OMI/Libreria Musicale Italiana), 147



**Example 1: Violin I and II from Balletto Terzo, Op. 3 by Giuseppe Colombi (1676)**

Colombi's Op. 2-5 publications are addressed and dedicated to his lifelong patron the Duke Francesco II D'Este. He worked for the Duke from the time he assumed the leadership of Modena in 1674 (at age 14)<sup>73</sup> to Francesco's and Colombi's death in 1694. Through Colombi's dedications we get an idea of his promotions and career ascendance, as he rises from "*Capo di gl'Instrumentisti*," in 1673 to *Vice Maestro della Capella* in 1676 to finally *Maestro di Capella nella Chiesa Cattedrale di Modana* [sic]" (1689).<sup>74</sup>

Although Colombi made sure to declare his job titles in his dedications, he didn't seem to use them to glorify himself as a composer per se. (Compare his chief rival, Giovanni Maria Bononcini, who self-titled himself as a member of Bologna's *Accademia di Filarmonici*, even though no records exist confirming this).<sup>75</sup> Colombi makes no mention in any of his dedicatory prefaces or notes to his reader of any such association. He continues to list his title of *Capo di gl'Instrumentisti*,

<sup>73</sup> Francesco II D'Este technically became ruler when he was two years old after Alfonso's death in 1662, but his mother, Laura Martinozzi, ruled as Regent.

<sup>74</sup> This is particularly interesting because there is hardly an instance of a Maestro di Capella serving in that position without writing vocal music. Marini composed extensive vocal music for his maestro jobs, and even while at Neuberg, those his post didn't require it. Biber likewise would write significant amounts of vocal music as well, particularly though ones that combined vocal and instrumental tropes in interesting ways. So, either Colombi was truly so exceptional enough at violin music that someone else composed the vocal music, or it simply wasn't preserved in the library along with everything else. While at first the second option seems more plausible, the degree to which both the printed and manuscript music collections at the Biblioteca Estense were catalogued and preserved, even during the seventeenth century, is remarkable, so missing an entire half of someone's catalog seems unlikely.

<sup>75</sup> Thomas John MacFarland. *Giovanni Colombi: His Position in the "Modenese School" During the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century*. PhD Dissertation, Kent State University, 1987, 23.

(Leader of the instrumentalists), a title only one step elevated from a simple *suonatore di violino* (violinist), even after he rises to the title of *Maestro di Capella*, seemingly quite proud of his accomplished instrumentalist status. Colombi didn't publish anything but instrumental music, nor do we have any evidence that he was actively involved in composing vocal music. His published instrumental works are modest in their technical and compositional experimentation. According to all bibliographic sources, including William Klenz, John Suess and Thomas McFarland, Colombi appears to have written only instrumental music.<sup>76</sup>

Overall, Colombi's published output is relatively unremarkable in terms of the history of virtuosity. Accordingly, he has been something of a victim of what Richard Taruskin calls the 'poietic fallacy,' for the very reason that virtuosi like Biagio Marini and Marco Uccellini have been venerated: the historiographical need to elevate music because it fits into a narrative of musical "evolution." Colombi did exceedingly well at his job as a virtuoso and violinist; but his published music is not terribly interesting. He did not have famous professional students, he did not self-promote through publishing, and he did not actively participate in the display of discourse in the Accademie. The survival of his manuscripts, however, make Colombi singularly important to a complete understanding of the history of violin-playing, and of virtuosity in general. We can 'read back' from his manuscripts into matters of patron-teacher personal relations, as well as individual playing technique, in a way that would not be possible had they only existed in print.

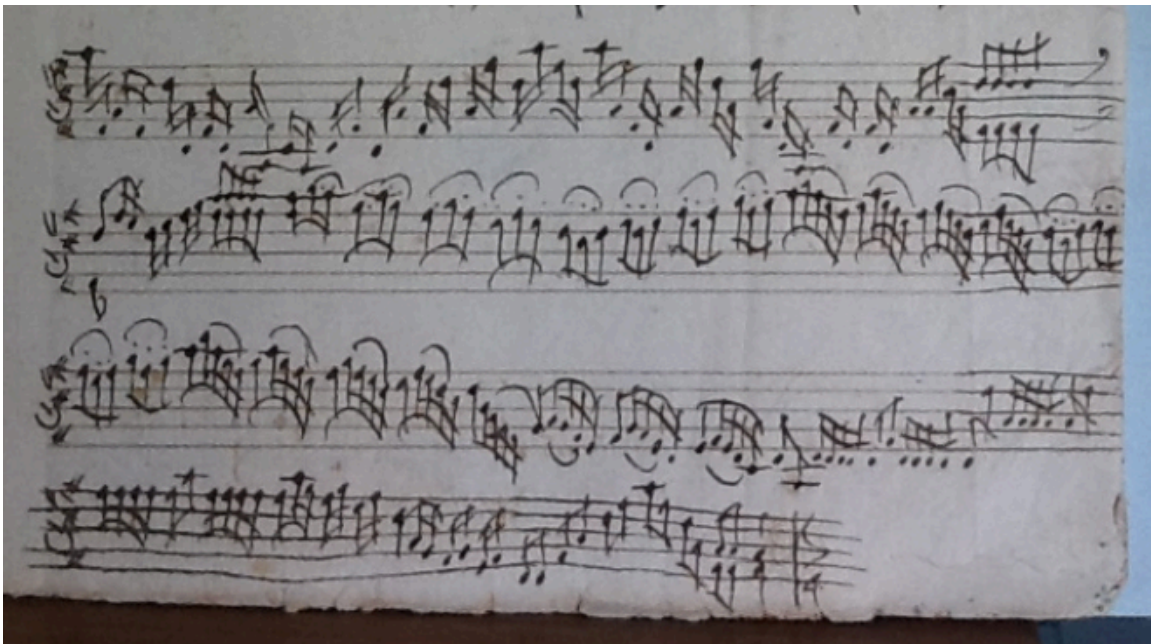
## MANUSCRIPT WORKS

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<sup>76</sup> See: William Klenz, *Giovanni Maria Bononcini of Modena*, (Durham, NC: Duke University, 1967); Thomas McFarland. Title, PhD Dissertation. Kent State University, 1987; John Suess, "Giuseppe Colombi's Dane Music for the Este Court in Modena." in *Marco Uccellini*. ed. Maria Caraci Vela and Marina Toffetti. (New York: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1996)

So, what do we hope to find in Colombi's manuscripts? It may be easier to start with that we do NOT hope to find: earlier versions of what he put into print. We do not have early versions of his published *opera*, and we do not have final published versions of his unpublished manuscripts. They are simply different entities.

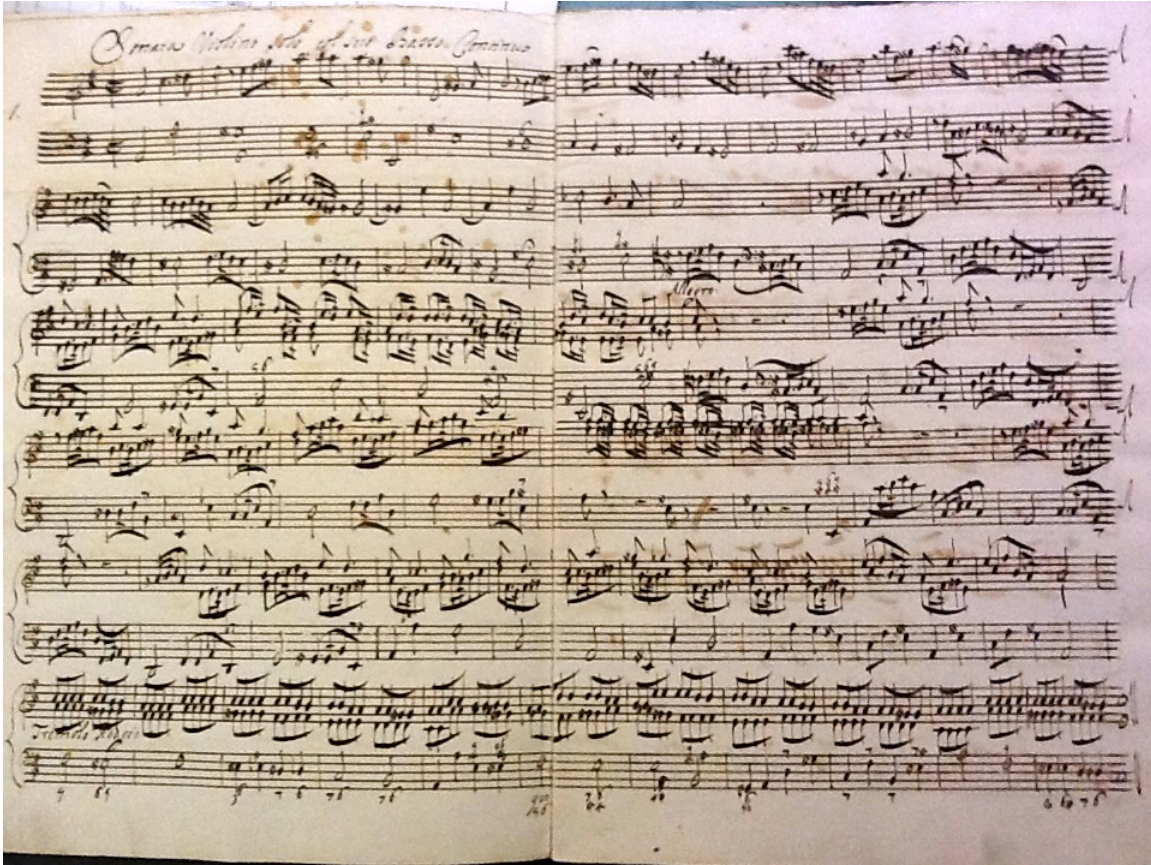
None of Colombi's manuscript pieces in the Estense collection exist in any kind of presentation copy or publication proof form. Instead, they bear traces of casual use: smudges, bowings, hastily scribbled notes. Colombi's handwriting is often sloppy, with irregular barlines, scant attention to keeping note heads clearly on one line or space, and scribbled-in extra text on the bottom of the paper on hand-drawn staff lines. **[See example below]**



**Example 2: Snippet from Colombi MS, I-MOE Mus.E.282**

Whoever would have looked at these sheets of music would have done so with the understanding that this was not a formal presentation, nor a preparation for one, but more of a shared set of directions among colleagues. An example of the difference is the copy of the Sonata "Alla Guerra," by John Paul Westhoff, which exists side by side with Colombi's work in I-MoE E

282 (more on why it's in Modena later).<sup>77</sup> It is in diligent, neat handwriting, interestingly crossing the page barrier in one long stream of musical “text.”



**Example 3: Manuscript of first two pages of Sonata “Alla Guerra” [Anonymous in text but identified as JP Westhoff by Gregory Barnett]. I-MOE Mus.E.282**

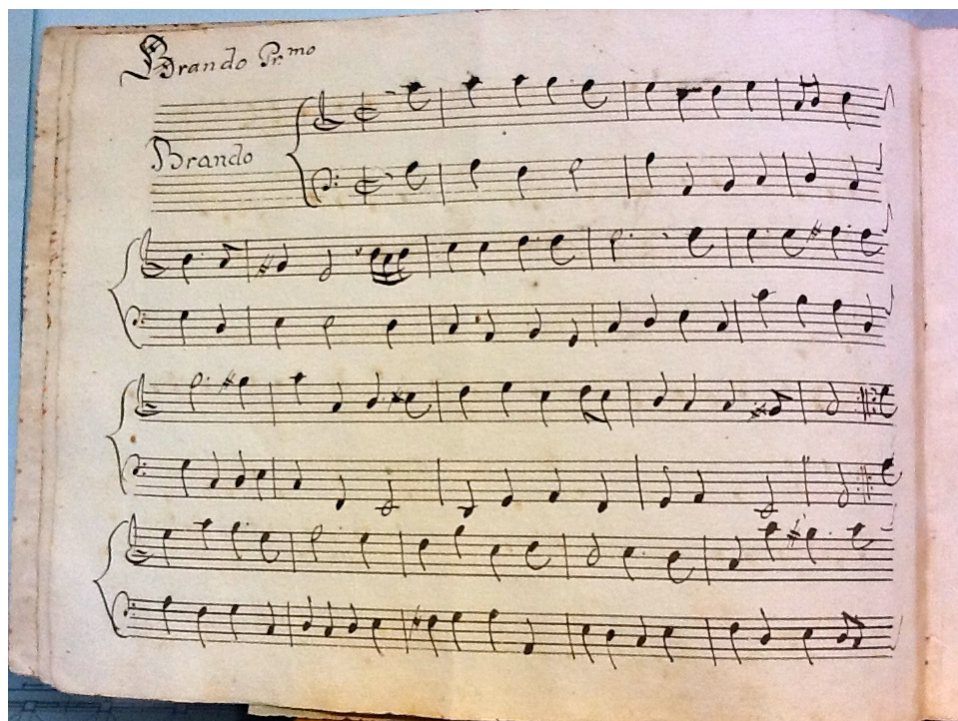
A happy medium between the two are Colombi’s vast collection of dance music, which make up the majority of the Estense manuscripts: written for violin and cello, these are in a decently legible hand, but still done with a quickness to the script, and only a moderate attention to detail. Colombi’s performing partners, the cellist Domenico Gabrielli and Giovanni Battista Vitali, no

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<sup>77</sup> Gregory Barnett, *Bolognese Instrumental Music: 1660-1710*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 150-151.

doubt was used to performing with Colombi at court on a regular basis, and to peering at and deciphering these scores.

**EXAMPLE 4: First pg. “Brando Primo” by Giuseppe Colombi, I-Moe Mus. F. 282**



Colombi’s manuscripts tangle our conventional understanding of compositional process. We tend to think of a manuscript being a less-developed stage in a compositional process, one that is in process to being turned into a published work. Manuscripts are on their way to becoming something else. They are a stepping stone to a published product, but not a final representation. However, with Colombi, manuscript pieces in the Estense collection, this is not the case. None of these exist in any kind of presentation copy or publication proof form, despite the fact that Colombi did successfully publish the previously discussed Op. 1-5. That does not mean that all of these manuscript works are in a non-finished form—they just weren’t published. They are fully composed out, with complete violin and basso-continuo lines indicated. Some pieces would have been quite suitable for

publication, such as the sonatas, sinfonias and dance music from Estense folio Mus. F 280, and the equally matched sonatas for violino e basso, Mus. F 277, and the various dance movements (ciacconae, bergamescas) and suites in the Mus. F 283.

This state of affairs differentiates the study of Colombi's manuscripts from standard sketch studies, like those of Kern, Taruskin or Jessie Owens.<sup>78</sup> I am not attempting to determine how Colombi arrived at a finished published product, but why he wasn't concerned with putting his most adventurous material in print at all, opting to leave it in rough henscratch. This suggests that its value during his lifetime wasn't based on a traditionally conceived "work" or "composition", but on its use value: as a mode of aiding in live performance by its creator, Giuseppe Colombi, before members of the Este family, and most importantly, Duke Francesco II D'Este.

Colombi's solo violin manuscripts contain a far higher and more imaginative degree of spectacular virtuosity than his printed work. Indeed, they ask more of the player than any of Colombi's contemporaries' *printed* works, including those of his more famous predecessor, Marco Uccellini. This is particularly evident in the "tromba" and scordatura pieces in folios Mus F. 280, 282 and 283 and the gargantuan 517-measure "Toccata da Violino del Colombi" from Mus. F 285, defy genre classification; Gregory Barnett has dubbed them "Bizzarerie."<sup>79</sup>

As we saw with Marini's op. 8 in Chapter One, printing works like these would have required a very costly production to hand-cut each new unique chord. This kind of sponsorship had only previously been granted by German courts such as Dresden and Neuberg. The only local "press" capable of such feats was a single individual, a true renaissance man, Carlo Antonio

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<sup>78</sup> See: Joseph Kerman, "Sketch Studies," *19th-Century Music* 6: 2 (Autumn 1982): 174-180, Richard Taruskin, "The Poietic Fallacy," *The Musical Times* 145, (Spring 2004): 7-34, and Jessie Ann Owens *Composers at Work: The Craft of Musical Composition 1450-1600* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1997)

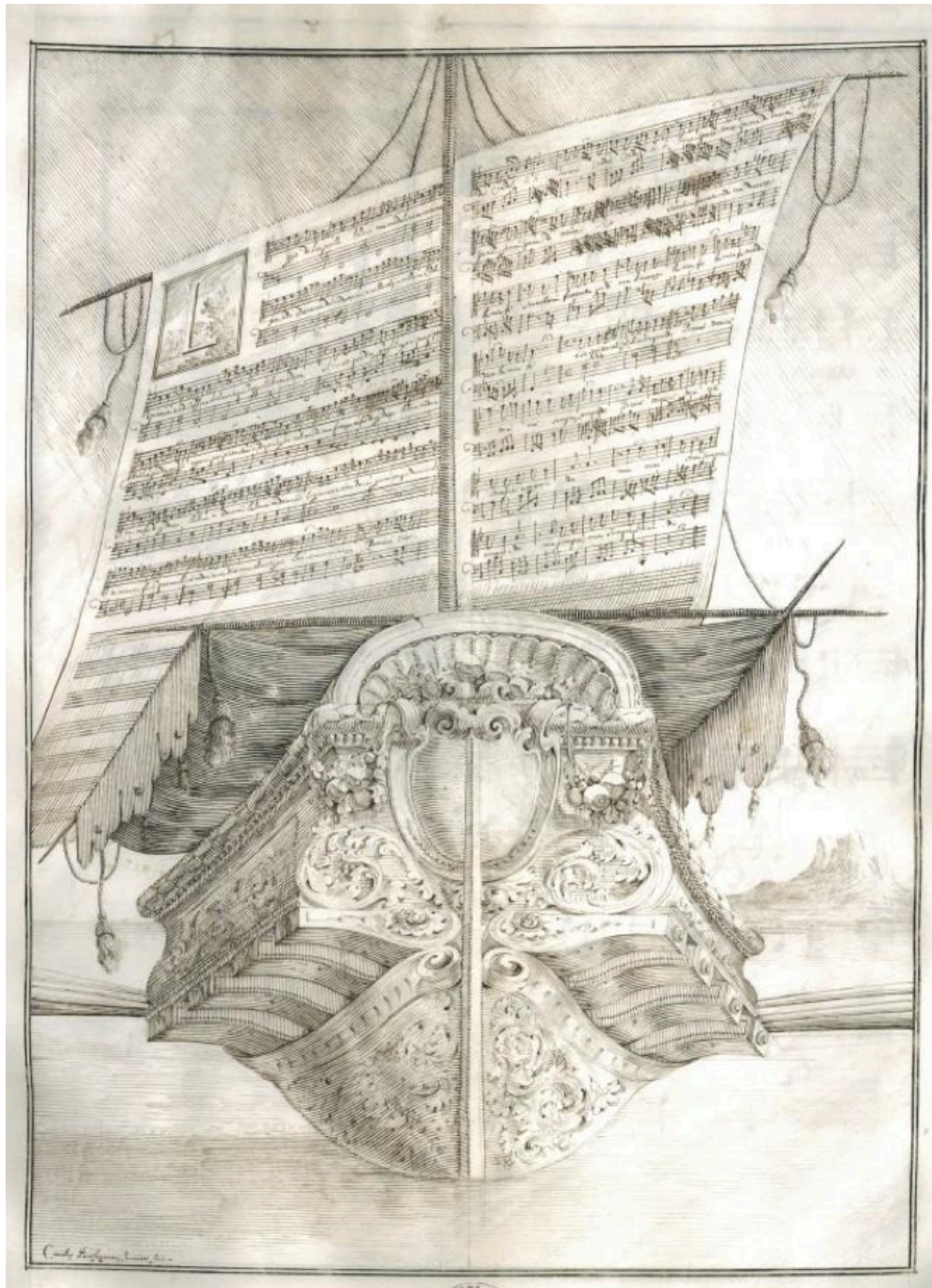
<sup>79</sup> (Gregory Barnett simply gives them the catchall title of "Bizzarerie" in his discussion of the pieces in his chapter on the Modena collection). Gregory Barnett, *Bolognese Instrumental Music*, 146.

Buffagnotti: set designer, painter, violinist and engraver. He created elaborate custom engravings for patrons of music, taking the Spectacle in Print to a whole new level. The career and works of Buffagnotti could be an entire chapter to themselves for the ways in which they fuse the visual and musical together; suffice it to say that these were extremely rare prints, created for single patrons, and were not sold to the public.<sup>80</sup>

**[Examples:** Pages from I-Moe Mus C. 312. “Cantate in musica di vari autori” Disegni by Carlo Buffagnotti ~second half of 17<sup>th</sup> century]

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<sup>80</sup> Gregory Barnett, *Bolognese Instrumental Music, 1660-1710*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 156-161.





The conundrum of Colombi's virtuoso works in manuscript invites us to ask, what does it mean to intentionally withhold a spectacular piece from publication? And where do we locate "the work" in these pieces?

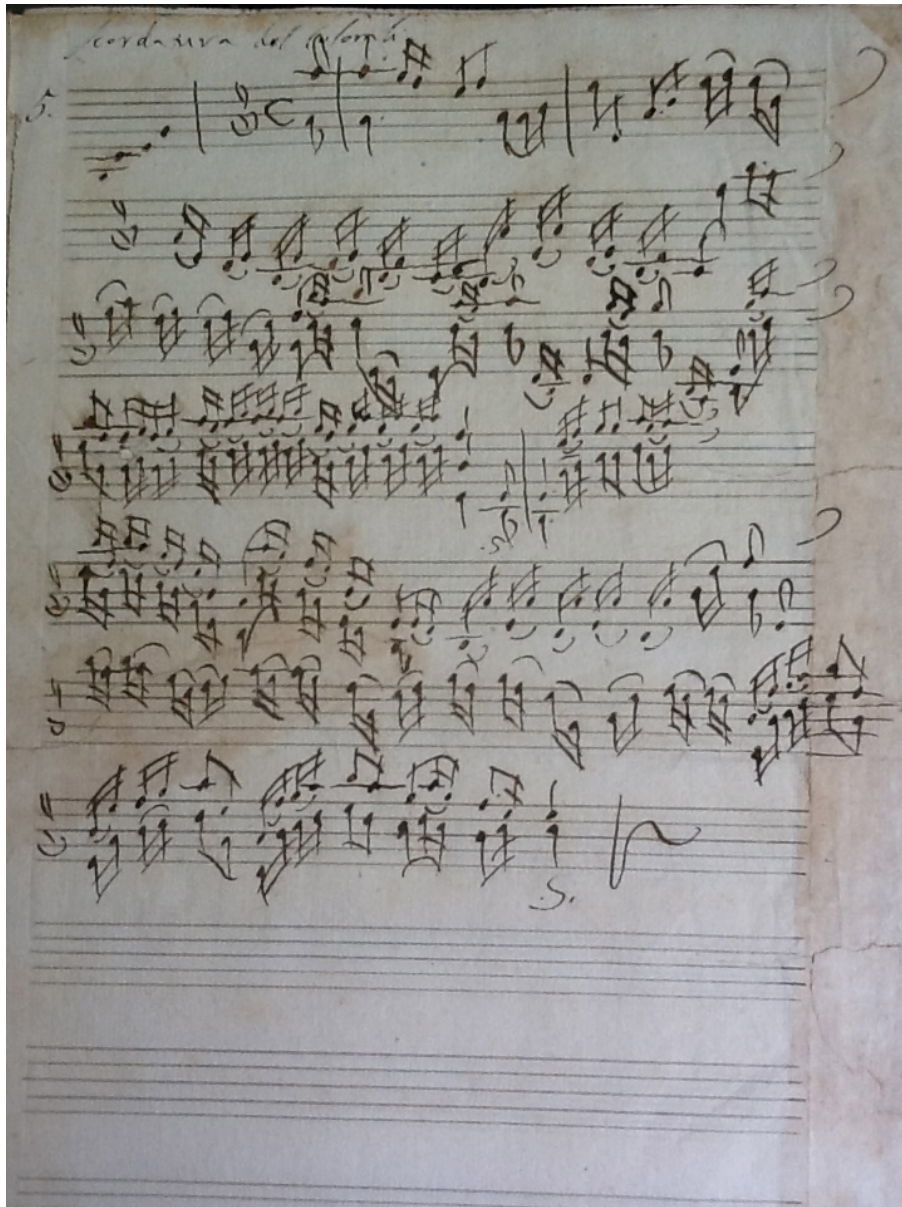
### **Virtuosi in Modena**

In all the collections of music discussed in this dissertation, from Marini and Fontana to Biber and Corelli, virtuosi used publishing as a very formal, public and polished way of presenting themselves to their patrons and the music-buying public as educated, dynamic, and spectacular

players. Carlo Farina and Biagio Marini were revered enough by their German patrons at Dresden and Neuberg that the nobles paid for the hand-cut wood blocks in order to publish their most spectacular violin works. Giovanni Battista Fontana was revered enough by Giovanni Reghino that even eleven years after the violinist's death, his sonatas were published in a kind of posthumous homage to the composer's virtue. In mid-seventeenth century Modena, this model still held true: Marco Uccellini, Colombi's virtuosic predecessor, published his Op. 7 *Ozjo Regio* in 1660, addressing a very specific patron (Cardinal Mazarin), but the prestige publication still created a formal display of a violinist's virtuosic abilities.

However, this model did not seem to apply to Giuseppe Colombi. He instead chose not to publish his virtuosic music, and most strikingly, his patron Duke Francesco II, cherished the one-of-a-kind sketches and pieces, preserving them in the Estense family library. The Colombi manuscripts survive by intention, not just by accident.

These pieces appear from the manuscripts to be specifically intended for personal performance by the composer, written in such a hasty manner that it seems he didn't care if anyone else could read what he scribbled on the pages, **such as this scordatura from I-Moe Mus E. 282 on the next page**. In the following example, notice how haphazard the sketchy the tuning of the scordatura is... crucial information for the success of the piece to be notated so hastily!



Colombi's "bizarrerie" are all for solo violin unaccompanied, with no basso continuo. Each of these pieces puts the body and instrument on display in unique and bizarre ways, often disfiguring the instrument through the mistuning of *scordatura* and obscuring the normal virtuosic properties of the violin in favor of showcasing invention and a *spettacolo private*. These pieces rely in many ways on the listener understanding the violin intimately as a concept and a sound, able to hear and appreciate extensions or distortions of its normal capabilities. As such, they point to a specific listener:

Colombi's "boss," Duke Francesco II D'Este—the dedicatee of his publications—who was also his violin student.<sup>81</sup>

## SINFONIA AND SONATA FROM THE MS Mus. F. 280

One of the most interesting aspects of the patron-performer relationships encoded in the Colombi manuscripts is a pedagogical one. Many works exist in multiple versions—not unfinished compositions, but versions of the same piece with increasing layers of difficulty, which create teachable versions of virtuosic works.<sup>82</sup> The “advanced” versions may include massive chordal writing, large sections *all’8va*, and bounced bow strokes. These multiple versions point to a shared knowledge between patron and teacher, one that could have worked to Colombi’s advantage and further garnered favor with the Duke. If Francesco was indeed studying from Colombi’s manuscripts, he would have had a kind of amateur insider knowledge of the amount of skill that his teacher possessed.

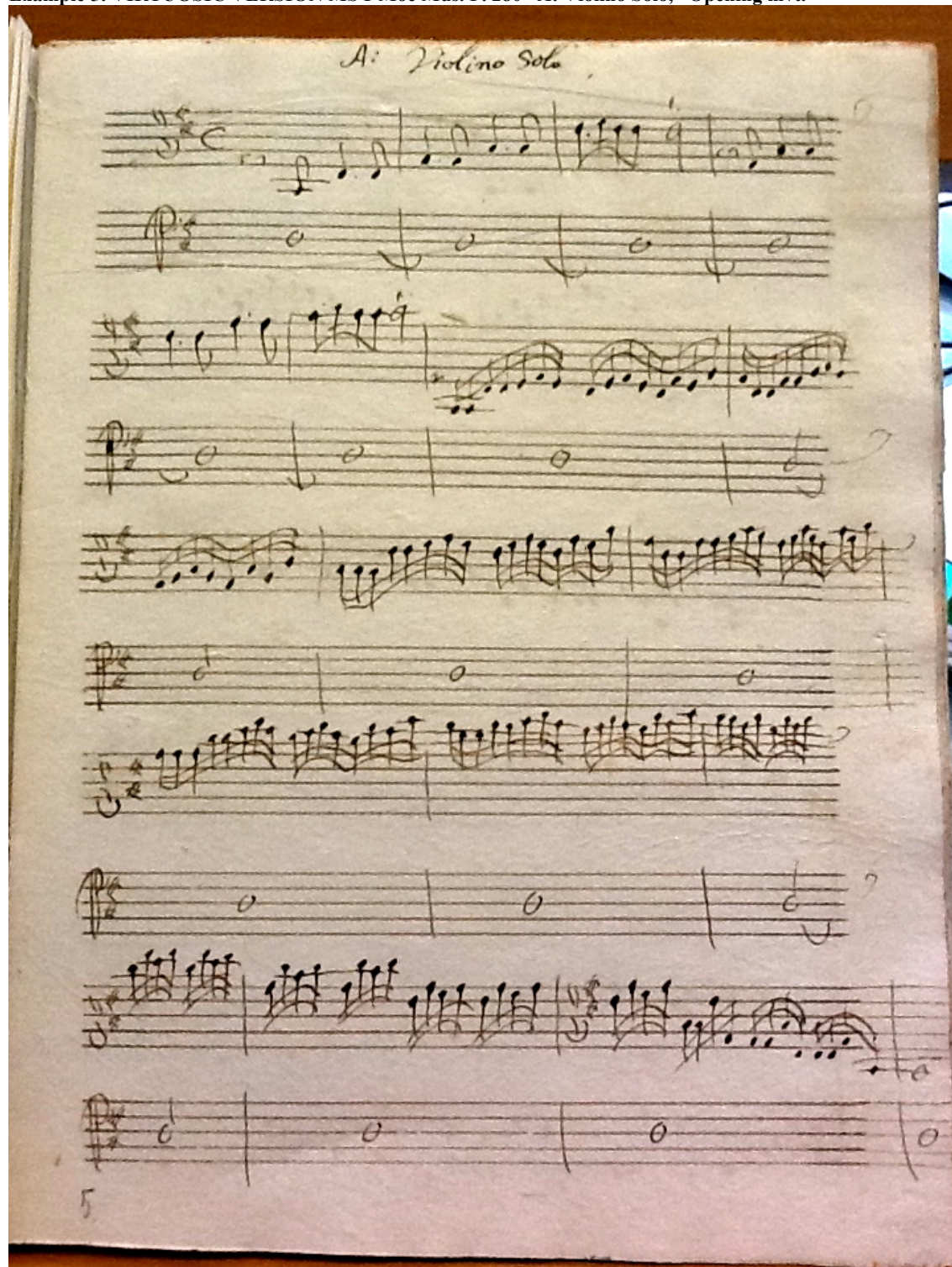
[Examples on Following Pages: 5) Virtuoso Version, 6) Edited Down Version]

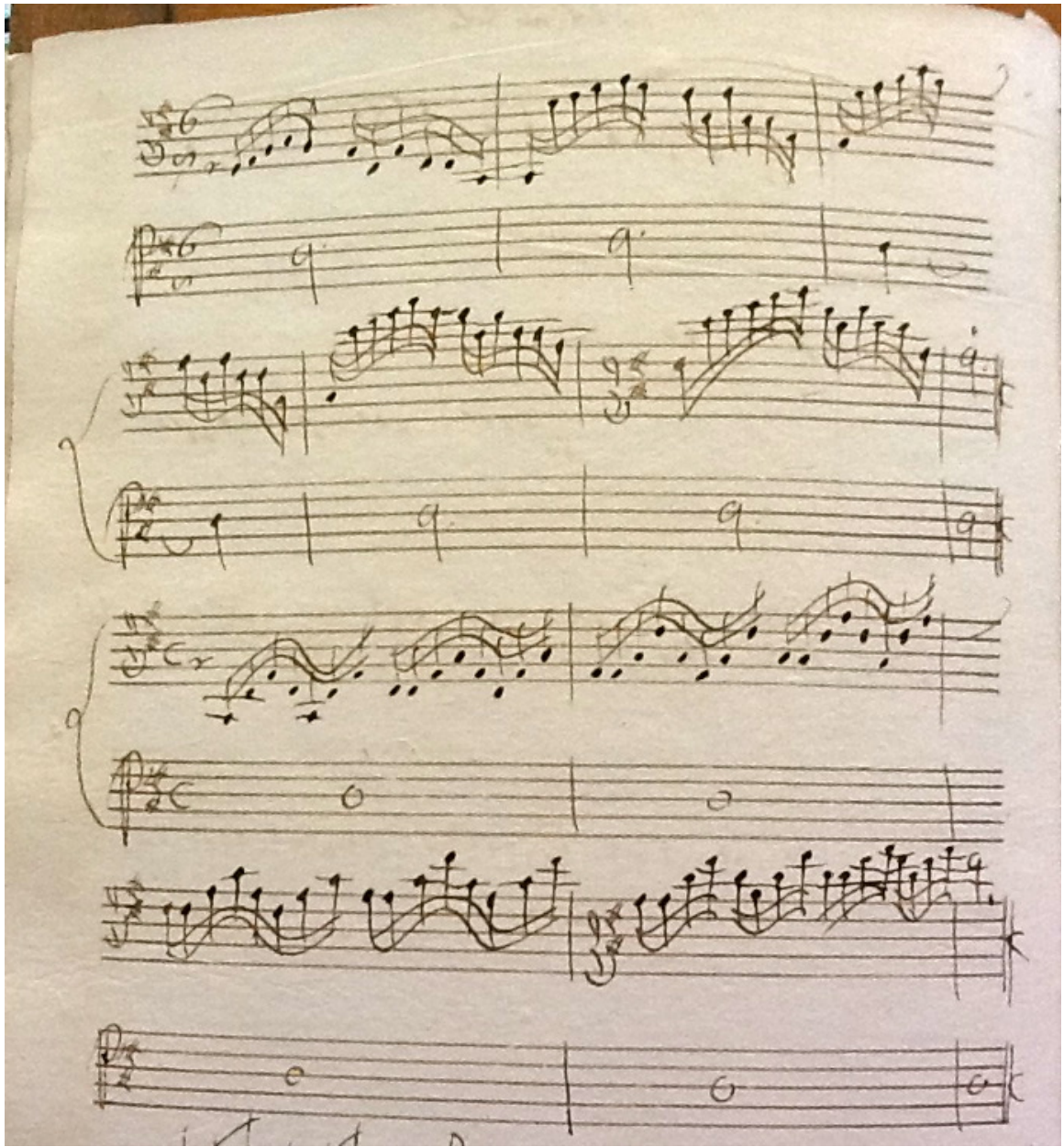
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<sup>81</sup> Colombi himself presents his royal-violin-teacher status in the dedication to his Op. 5 : “Sia Gloria eternal della rozza mia mano negli anni piu teneri dell’ A.V. S... l’haver sortito l’honore d’avanzare la di lei destra nata a gli Scetri a trattare pacificamente l’arco sonoro [May the glory be eternal of my own crude hand that had the honor of advancing your right hand (destined for the scepter) toward the peaceful handling of the sonorous bow since the earliest years of your majesty].” Giuseppe Colombi, Sonata da camera a tre strumenti, Op. 5 (Bologna: Monti, 1689) Translated by Gregory Barnett, *Bolognese Instrumental Music*, 136. Even more interesting is the added “insegno di violino” (“violin teacher”), at the bottom of the title page a rare designation indeed in published works.

<sup>82</sup> Barnett, 138-139

Example 5: VIRTUOSIC VERSION MS I-Moe Mus. F. 280 "A: Violino Solo," Opening mvt.

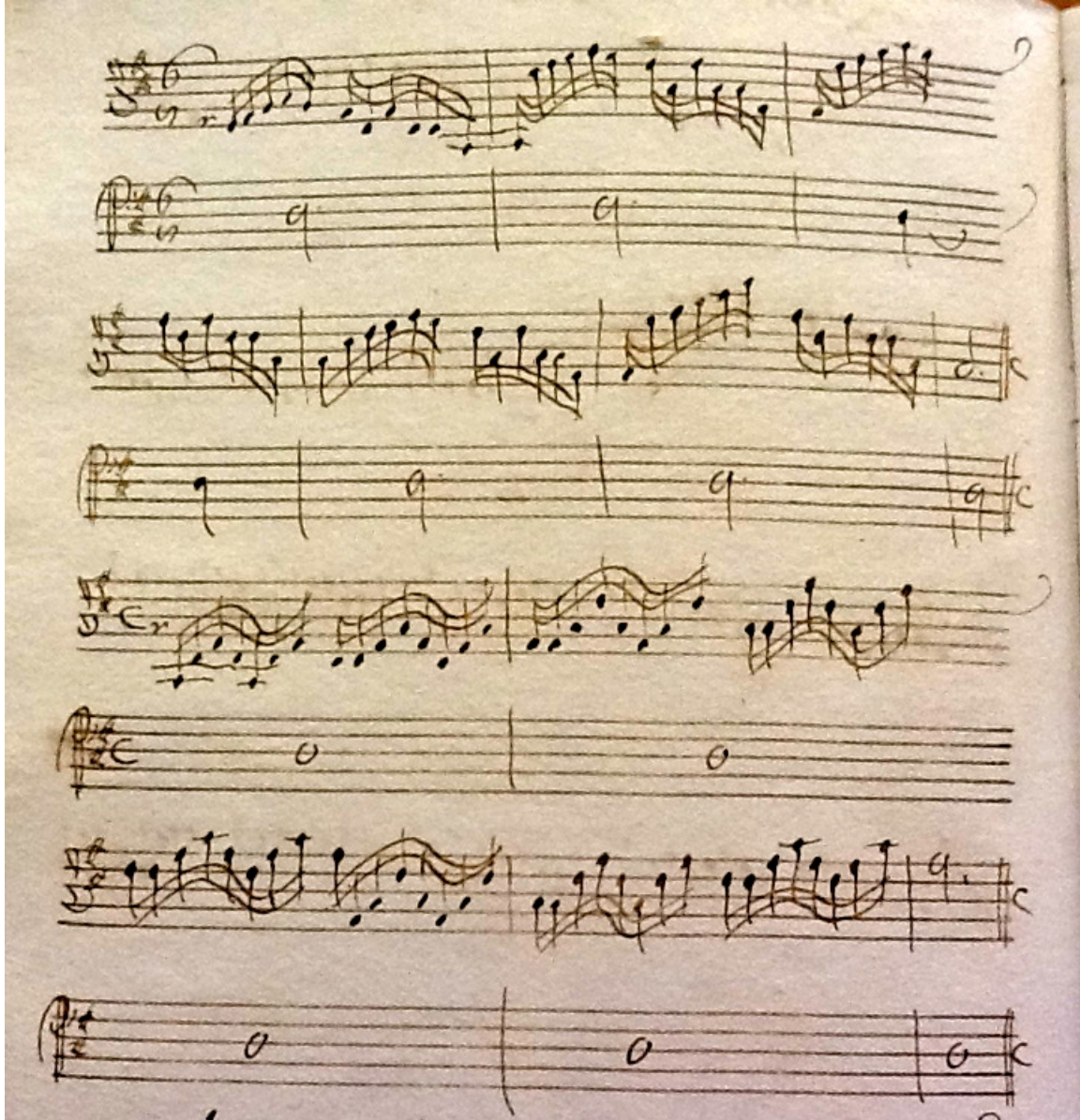




Example 4: Opening Movement, EDITED VERSION, MS, I-Moe Mus.F.280 “[Sinfonie] A: Violino Solo” (Opening Movement)

*Sinfonia A: Violino Solo*

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for a violin solo. The score is arranged in ten staves. The first staff is the Violino Solo part, starting with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The second and fourth staves are for the Violoncello (Cello), with a bass clef and a common time signature. The third, fifth, seventh, and ninth staves are for the Violini (Violins), with a treble clef and a common time signature. The sixth, eighth, and tenth staves are for the Violini (Violins), with a bass clef and a common time signature. The score is written in a clear, legible hand. A circular library stamp is visible in the bottom right corner, reading "BIBLIOTECA ESTENSE - MODENA".



An example is in the volume Ms. F 280, the “Sinfonia a violino solo.” The piece exists in two versions. It starts with a slow opening movement, followed by a fugue-like second movement, and closes with a triple-meter gigue-like section.

The differences between the two versions are first evident in measures 11-13, where in the more difficult version Colombi requires the player to jump up to what is now thought of as 6<sup>th</sup> position, for a fast passage. In the next measure the passage reaches 8<sup>th</sup> and then 10<sup>th</sup> position (b<sup>7</sup>)

before sequencing down the fingerboard. For a baroque violinist this is literally “the end of the world as we know it,” fingers grazing the far end of the fingerboard (or depending on the instrument, potentially playing off the edge!), the instrument perched perilously on the shoulder. The lack of a chinrest would make the descent even more perilous than the initial climb. (SEE GLOSSARY for an explanation of why this is so) This opening provides both a visual and aural display of the violinist conquering the heights of the instrument at great speed and facility.<sup>83</sup>

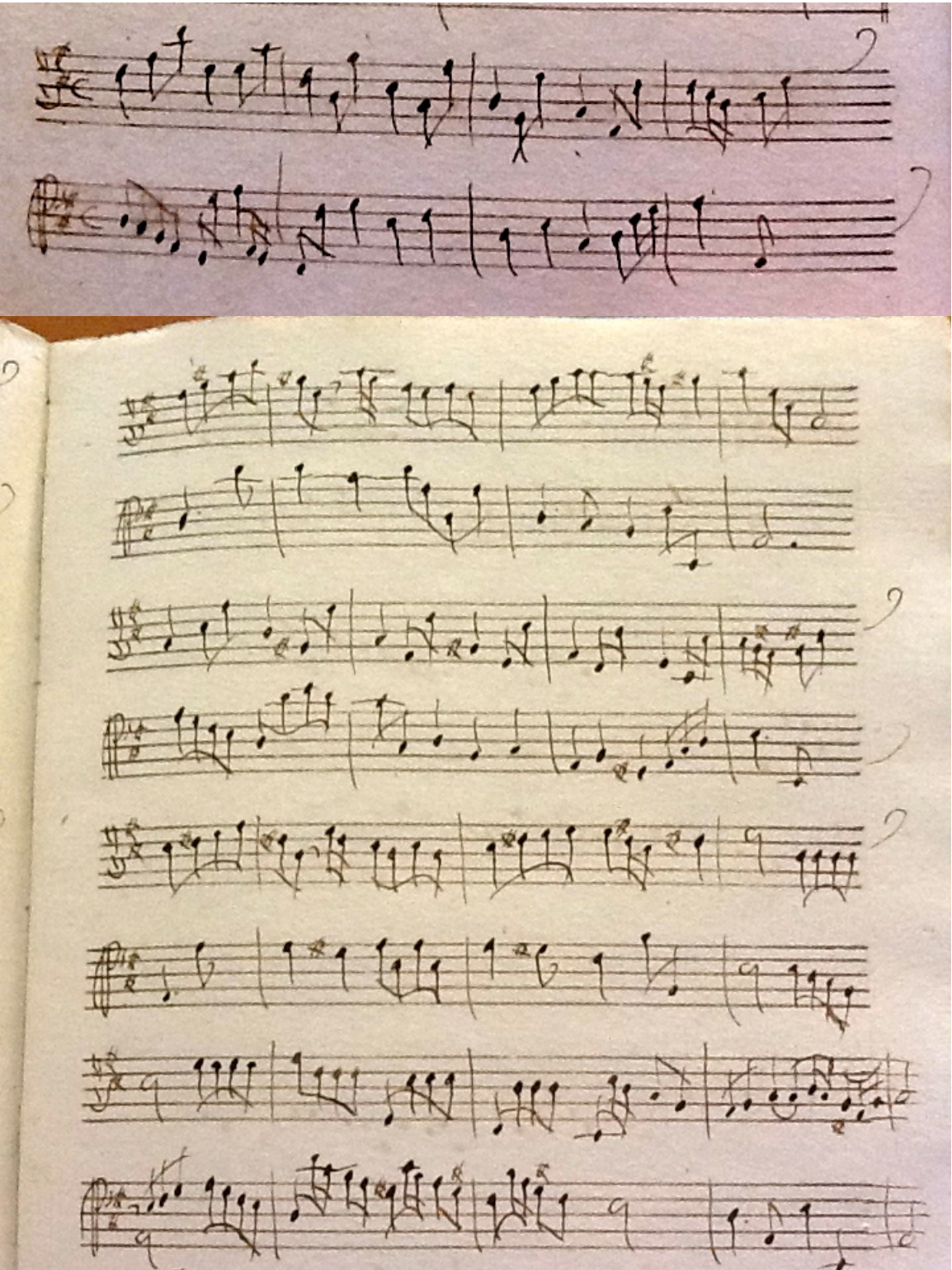
Conversely, the simplified version is edited and adjusted to preclude entirely the need for any shifting. This creates some odd registral displacements. In bar 15, when the first version is able to complete a smooth register descent, the second version has to re-jump up the octave back to the e-string, in order to re-descend to the cadence. The effect of the grand ascent to the stratosphere is changed; instead it sounds like the violinist is essentially three times in the same register, transforming technical risk-taking into tame interest.

After the opening toccata-like first section comes a fugue-like movement. In the simplified version, the six-bar opening subject is very straightforward, made up of simple quarter-note and eighth-note sequential rhythmic figures. When played, it seems as if there’s something missing: the repetitiveness feels a little pedantic. By measure 13, it is simplified further with a stream of repeated eighth-notes.

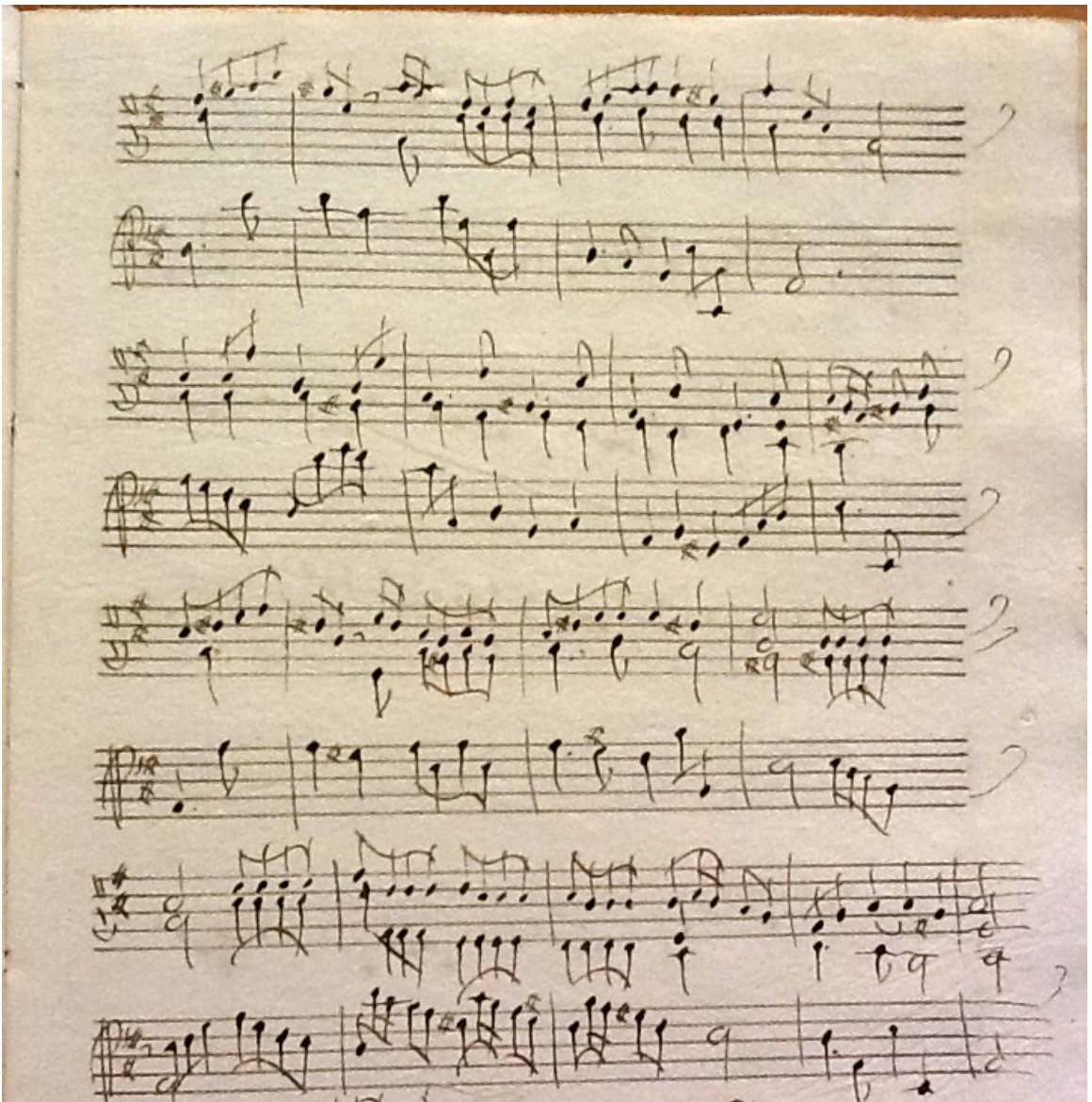
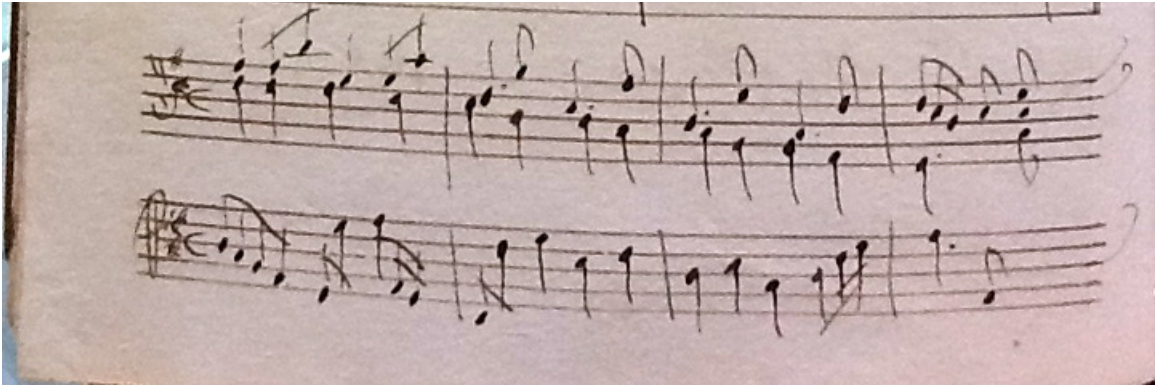
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<sup>83</sup> Giuseppe Colombi, *4 Sonate per violin e basso continuo*, MS, I-MOe (ante 1694). Transcribed by Vittoria Rosapane. (Musedita: Albese con Cassano, Italy, 2006).

Example 5: EDITED MS I-Moe Mus.F. 280, "Fugue"



Example 6: VIRTUOSIC Version, MS I-Moe Mus. F. 280, "Fugue"



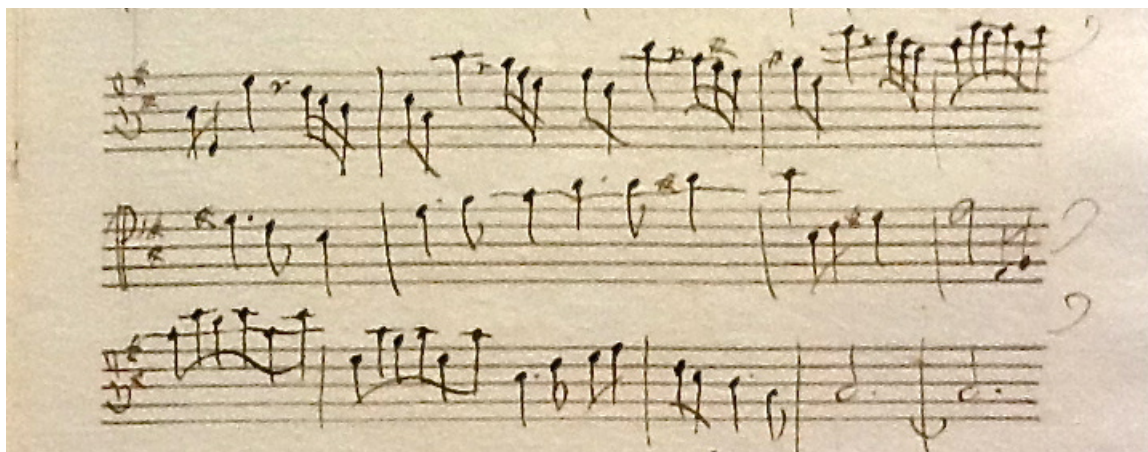
That feeling that ‘something is missing’ in the simpler version is not unfounded. The more difficult version of the second movement has more than double the notes of its counterpart: it is a double-voice fugato, both voices articulated by the left hand of the violinist in double and sometimes triple-stopped chords. In the beginning, the simpler version’s simple descending pattern of broken 6ths is transformed into a chain of suspensions, requiring position changes between double stops, an advanced technique.

In bar 14, where the repeated eighth notes had been in the simple version, the passage is similarly transformed into chains of thirds and sixths played chordally. The ‘virtuoso’ version of this movement is a left-hand workout, while the right hand has to articulate the difference between both ‘voices’ on the page.

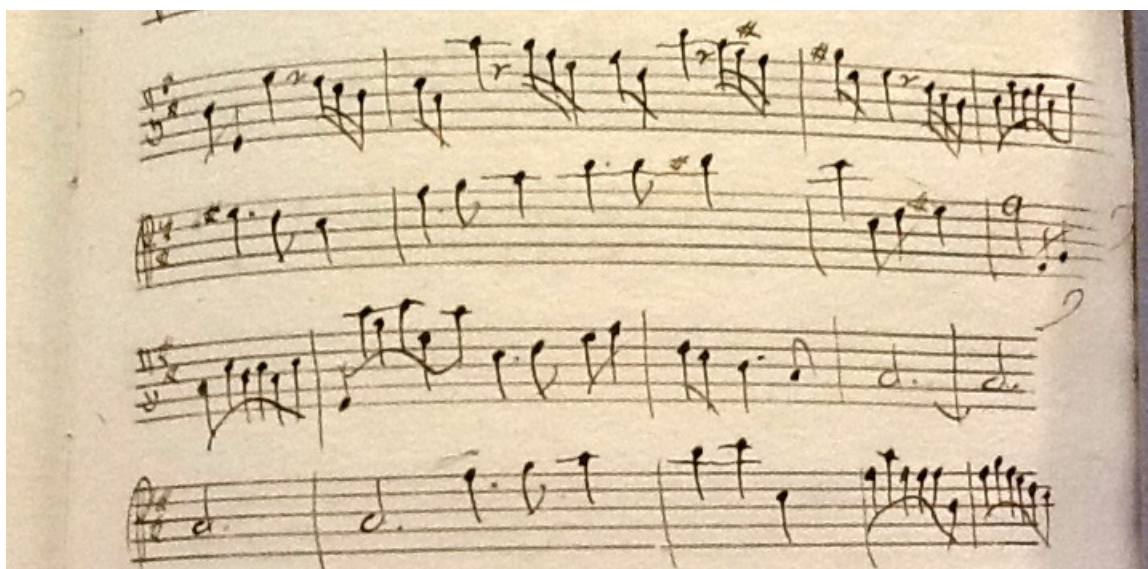
In the third section, a gigue-like dance movement, there is significantly less difference between the two versions of the previous movements. Only a handful of bars are changed. In the ‘virtuoso’ version, the gigue has a sequential sweeping build upward from the bottom register on the G-string, outlining a D-major arpeggio as it winds its way up to d<sup>'''</sup>. In the simpler version, this gradual ascent to the top of the violin register is broken by a sudden octave jump down in bar 8. The registral climb is removed, but also removed are the risk and fear of missing the shift.

In bars 27-30, Colombi makes a similar editing choice in regards to octave jumps and register displacements. The jumps present in the ‘virtuoso’ version are dramatic, starting with an octave skip from e<sup>''</sup> to e<sup>'''</sup>, a left-hand leap of four positions. In the adjusted version, no dramatic octave jump is used, and the scalar passage continues downward instead of leaping upwards through bar 29. From bar 30, the two versions are the same. The simplified version creates a different rhetorical emphasis, as well as making the passage more accessible to an intermediate-level violinist.

Example 7: Virtuoso Version, MS I-Moe Mus. F.280 3<sup>rd</sup> mvt, mm. 25-34



Example 8: Edited Version, MS I-Moe Mus, F. 280, 3<sup>rd</sup> mvt. mm. 25-34



Other pieces in the collection, particularly the sonatas contained in book labeled Mus F. 280, have similar kinds of judgments made in their revisions of sonatas.<sup>84</sup> Not all of them are just registral displacements, however. In the “Sonata a Violino Solo” in D Major, in the third “Grave” section (bars 14-19), the virtuosic version has a cadenza-like passage with descending scalar figures marked with staccato dots under slur marks. This virtuosic technique is sometimes called up-bow-staccato; it

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<sup>84</sup> All the Colombi *Libri* are a series of individual folios/sheets of paper that have been gathered up later, stitched together, and then bound into the collected books in the Library. Due to various sets of handwriting involved in the cataloguing and labeling of various music books, it appears none of this work was done by Colombi himself.

showcased the performer’s right hand technique and bow control. (see GLOSSARY)<sup>85</sup> In the Duke-friendly version, the same passage is under a simple slur, which would have a similar effect of changing the texture, without demanding a much more difficult technique.

## COLOMBI’S PEDAGOGY

It is interesting to speculate on how these pieces might have functioned within a teacher-student relationship. Unlike almost every other surviving piece of “teaching music” from the period, such as Zanetti’s *il Scolaro* (1645), and Bismantova’s *Compedium Musicale* (1677), Colombi’s works appear to have been edited *down* to an intermediate level, not composed *up* to a professional level, suggesting a “backward” compositional trajectory. Compositionally, it makes no sense for a competent composer and violinist such as Colombi to deliberately and systematically limit his imagination; the only plausible explanation is pedagogical.

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Modena, Italy, February 1678

Giuseppe Colombi heard the bells chiming from the Duomo in Piazza Grande as he rubbed his hands together to keep warm, violin case slung over his shoulder, walking briskly down Via Emilia towards the Ducal Palace on a Wednesday afternoon. He still had fifteen minutes till his lesson started, so he would make it on time. The giant Palazzo Ducale loomed before him as he turned onto Largo San Giorgio, the palace dwarfing the city into which it had wedged itself less than a hundred years prior, construction scaffolding still encasing the magnificently high right wall of the

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<sup>85</sup> Colombi was not the first person to indicate up-bow staccato in virtuosic music, but he seems to have been the first Italian. Judy Tarling indicates that this technique was first used by the seventeenth-century German/Austrian violinists Walther, Westhoff, Biber and Schmelzer. Judy Tarling *Baroque String Playing for Ingenious Learners*, (St. Albans, UK: Corda Music, 2000), 141.

Palazzo. Francesco's father, Duke Alfonso IV had proudly began the project to proclaim a new era of the Este Family—too bad he hadn't lived to see it finished. At least it seemed Francesco II would be up to finishing the task, or at least Cesare Ignatio, his cousin, would ensure it got done.

Colombi waved to the guards as he walked through the massive French-inspired archway, crossing the courtyard where horses and carriages were tethered, and lightly climbed up the large staircase to the second floor and the Duke's music room. He heard the tell-tale slightly scratchy sounds, careening out of control as they attempted a fast passage a little too fast. Colombi smiled as the passage came to an abrupt halt, followed by muted cursing through the door. The violinist tried it again, getting a few notes further into the passage before the muffled cursing ensued again.

"The question is: Will he take it slower?" Colombi mused aloud to himself, waiting outside the door. A passing *cameriere*, one of Francesco's servants, smiled.

"He hasn't yet today. Or yesterday. Just wants to play it fast like you, maestro."

"Yes, only I practice a little more than he does." The *cameriere's* knowing smile grew just a little larger.

"Si, Maestro Colombi. Shall I let him know you are here?" Colombi nodded. The *cameriere* knocked forcefully on the large carved door before entering.

"*Serenissimo*, Maestro Colombi is here for your lesson." Colombi entered to see his 17-year-old violin student in his shirt-sleeves and bare-headed-- his giant blond curly wig hanging haphazardly on its stand beside the music stand, overseeing the proceedings. Francesco II D'Este, Duke of Modena and Reggio, held his violin in his hands and beamed at his violin teacher as he walked in the room.

"Maestro Colombi! What perfect timing. This passage in the sinfonia you gave me has been giving me quite a bit of trouble this week. I want to play it at my academy Saturday. You must make

it possible.” Colombi laid his violin case on the table and unpacked his own instrument, carefully wedging the frog into the notched slot to tighten the hair.

“*Duca*, what portion seems to be grieving you?”

“It’s this bit right here. This passage is so wonderful with its sweep up and down, but you have interrupted it so harshly just here —“ he pointed halfway down the page, where one lonely little shift made the gigue melody peek up above the staff lines. “I must shine as I play it, and you do not permit me!”

Colombi let out a small sigh as he considered whether today’s lesson would be about reviewing shifting, or whether he would just rewrite the passage again.

“You know, *Serenissimo*. I have a couple of things we can try... did you try that fingering I showed you last week, where it does 1-2-1-4?”

“Of course! But listen.” And Francesco put his violin on his shoulder, and proceeded to start not at the problem passage, but 17 bars earlier at the beginning of the movement. Listening, Colombi admired the Duke’s instinctive sense of phrase. But sure enough, upon approaching the problem measure, the Duke tensed, sped up and crescendoed, stopping with a squawk. He had taken a flying leap up the fingerboard and fallen a half-step flat.

“Wonderful, *Duca*, but let’s try this...” Colombi lifted his violin and played the passage, fingers gliding effortlessly into third position and lightly hopping back down again. “See, when we move the hand one note early, then we don’t have to fly so far. We are prepared. Now you play it, but maybe just a little slower...” The Duke began again, slowing down only maybe one heartbeat’s worth of tempo, and Colombi stopped him. “Slower, slower. You would not teach your favorite courser to jump at a gallop, would you?” Now it was the Duke’s turn to exhale, staring intently at his left hand as he tried cautiously letting his first finger and wrist lead the shift before placing his fourth finger. Sure enough, it was in tune. “Bravo! Now let’s do it again—slowly.” Again, success. “Signore,

you of course achieve anything you set your mind to do.” He hoped the Duke would remember the fingering this time, and just maybe, they would leave the passage as he had written it this time...

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### **Performer and Patron:**

These drastically different versions of the sinfonias and sonatas suggest a way to further nuance the theories of patronage in Early Modern Italy laid out by Claudio Annibaldi.<sup>86</sup> Annibaldi reminds us that published prints of music were never just about the music, and that when nobility kept musicians in their entourage they were never paying for the sheets of music on the page, they were paying for the experience of hearing those notes brought to life. When Colombi gave a live performance of his latest sonata or scordatura innovation, those five minutes were the culmination of everything the Duke was paying for. The publication of the musician’s works was therefore a display to the rest of the “world” (that is, the music buying *cittadini* of would-be courtiers and minor nobility, and Francesco’s fellow royals) of the Patron’s good taste in his choice of employees. While Colombi published four volumes “humbly laid at the feet of highest and most serene”<sup>87</sup> Duke Francesco, the choicest material was for the private sphere of the Este family. This was in fact ‘Musica reservata’ in its truest sense.

### **MAESTRO E SCOLARO**

Giuseppe Colombi and Duke Francesco II D’Este had an unusual patron-performer relationship. Rather than being distant from what his musicians were doing, Francesco II followed in the tradition that his father, Alfonso IV, had done before him: taking violin lessons with the court

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<sup>86</sup> Claudio Annibaldi, “Towards a Theory of Musical Patronage,” *Reverare*, 10 (1998): 173-174.

<sup>87</sup> “...dalle quali non potrei ricevere maggior gloria che l’essere per mezzo d’esse portato a piedi V [ostr] A[ltezza] S[erenissima].” Giuseppe Colombi, *Balletti, Correnti... Op. 3* (Bologna: Monti, 1674)

virtuoso.<sup>88</sup> For Alfonso IV, that violinist had been Marco Uccellini, who had lived and worked at the Estense court for over 25 years until Alfonso's death. This love of impeccable string playing was passed along to Francesco II.<sup>89</sup>

However, Francesco took patronage of instrumental music to a whole new level. While it appears he left much of the day-to-day business dealings of the Court to his cousin Cesare Ignazio, Duke Francesco maintained a very hands-on approach to the minutiae of his musical capella. Victor Crowther writes "The system of management was autocratic. Every decision about the cappella was either initiated by the duke or required his personal consent. Once decisions were approved by him they were put into operation by the court treasurer... Pietro Zerbini, who kept the private registers, and by trusted officials like the archivist, Lodovico Tagliavini, or the duke's private secretary, Giovanni Battista Giardini. Their function was to liaise [sic] with the *maestro di cappella* over administrative details so that the duke's wishes could be carried out to perfection."<sup>90</sup>

Under Francesco, the court orchestra had the largest number of members it had had for over a decade. In the year that Francesco took office, the budget for the court capella was quadrupled, from 212 scudi to 979, and both Giovanni Maria Bononcini and Giuseppe Colombi were admitted.<sup>91</sup> A *Capella* instrumentalist was paid not only a monthly salary, but also room and board. Colombi saw his monthly rate rise 800% from 8 lire to 96 lire in 10 years.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> For Alfonso, that violinist had been Marco Uccellini, who had lived and worked at the Estense court for over 25 years until the death of his boss/violin student, when he moved to Parma. Peter Allsop, *The Italian Trio Sonata*, (Oxford: Oxford University, 1992), 12-13.

<sup>89</sup> As well as cultivating a lifelong 25-year working relationship with Colombi, Francesco seemingly had excellent taste in virtuosi, as in the late 1680's, he lobbied extensively to recruit Arcangelo Corelli to leave his post at Cardinal Pamphilij's court in Rome and come to Modena and work for him. After almost a year of back and forth communication between Corelli's assistant and Francesco's assistants in Rome, he finally gave up. However, he must have made quite the impression on Il Bolognese, because Corelli dedicated his Op. 3 (1689) collection of trio sonatas to the Duke. Peter Allsop, *Arcangelo Corelli: New Orpheus of Our Times*, (Oxford: Oxford University, 1999), 40-42.

<sup>90</sup> Victor Crowther. "A Case-Study in the Power of the Purse: The Management of the Ducal 'Cappella' in Modena in the Reign of Francesco II d'Este." *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 115: 2 (1990): 209.

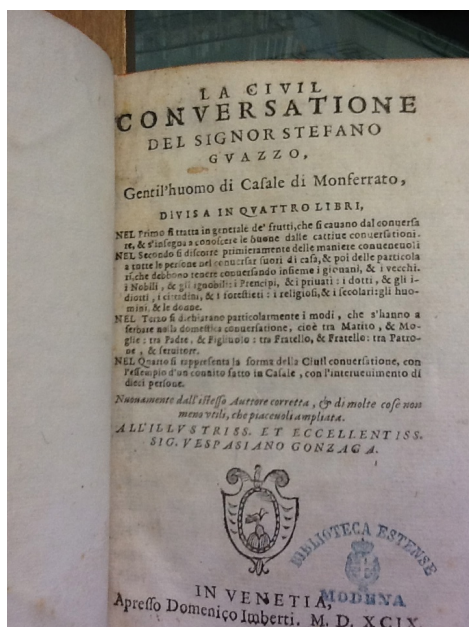
<sup>91</sup> Victor Crowther, 210-214

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

But not only was Francesco interested in purely listening to instrumental music, but also he wanted insider knowledge as well, and for that, he turned to his violin teacher, Giuseppe Colombi. By teaching his student/patron a version of the pieces that he could actually perform, Colombi was giving the Duke “insider knowledge” on how a sinfonia was put together. The edits in the Sinfonia suggest that Colombi was not only creating pieces that are accessible for his student: he was making the student more aware of how the work is put together, giving him an even greater feeling of ownership of the piece and the experience of performing. With this kind of knowledge, the student would have had a feeling that they could empathetically participate in the creation of the spectacle of “the work.” The alterations also enabled Francesco’s *sprezzatura* to trump any actual musical discipline, allowing him to focus on the overall gestures and affects of the music, without getting bogged down in those petty professional details like shifting and chords, which, as a busy Duke, he couldn’t be bothered with.

For a ruler such as Duke Francesco II, it was paramount to portray himself at court as *un uomo di virtù*, a special class of being, always noble, whose moral and personal qualities are so outstanding that they overflow in a myriad of pursuits and manifestations. Castiglione’s 1528 *Book of the Courtier* gives accounts of how courtiers and attendants were to behave at court; but it was assumed that those who ruled would model these attributes. A slightly later book, Stefano Guazzo’s *Il Civil Conversazione* (1574), had numerous reprints throughout the seventeenth century, and became one of most popular manuals of how to perform Early Modern noble masculinity. A copy exists in the Estense Library as part of the original Ducal collection upon which the library was founded.

Example 9: The Estense Copy of *La Civil Conversatione*



Duke Francesco's *virtù* on the violin had to appear polished, precise and competent, but not as overtly spectacular as that of his virtuosic employees. If he were to possess—and display—too great skill, it would have suggested to his court that he was distracted from the task of rebuilding a fallen family, and given to wanton excess<sup>93</sup> Even worse, he would be putting himself on a par with his very skilled servants, professional whose sole job and purpose was to excel in their instrument to serve the noble.

Andrew Dell'Antonio writes: “Guazzo himself suggested the existence of two categories of “seminobility,” one derived by blood and the other by *virtù*; and while full nobility could belong to those who had both qualities, legitimacy derived by blood could be lost over time if a family began to lose *virtù*.” The Este family could have been a notorious example of this, having been evicted from the high-profile court of Ferrara and forced to rule the much more lowly and smaller scale court of Modena. While Alfonso IV's marriage to Laura Martinozzi (Cardinal Mazarin's niece), and

<sup>93</sup> These were traits for which his mother Laura Martinozzi and sister Maria Beatrice had already admonished him, even from abroad in England. Luciano Chiappini, *Gli Estense: Mille anni di storia*, (Milan: Corbo Editore, 1967), 487-488

Maria Beatrice's marriage to James Stuart of England were fortuitous, Francesco II ruled knowing his hold on true nobility was tenuous at best.

Castiglione's Count in Book of the *Courtier* speaks of how desirable it is to be able to have one's attendant well-versed in many instruments, capable of responding flexibly to musical situations at court.<sup>94</sup> While nobility had looked to Castiglione in the late sixteenth century, the role of music for the nobleman was changing by the seventeenth century. Versatility and a wide range of talents was part of having *virtù*, and having the means to hire specialists to educate oneself in such talents was evidence of a ruler's commitment to achieving them. Andrew Dell'Antonio writes "What distinguishes the connoisseur of the 1630's from his Castiglione 'grandfather' is the idea that while the arts are interdependent, they become unique in that each demands a varied set of "critical competencies." These competencies in turn require (create?) the notion of discrete art forms and discrete artworks, though of course the elite connoisseur is capable of negotiating both the specific competencies and the 'general rhetoric' of the arts."<sup>95</sup>

### **Colombi, Francesco and Virtù.**

So it is within this context that we can view the relationship between Giuseppe Colombi and Duke Francesco II. Colombi the teacher became the arbiter between Colombi the virtuoso violinist, and Francesco the possessor of *virtù*. Colombi earned his way into this position and kept it by being a virtuoso performer, and a superior virtuoso to Bononcini, (and by the evidence, also a better

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<sup>94</sup> "After everyone had laughed at this, the Count continued as follows: 'Gentlemen, I must tell you that I am not satisfied with our courtier unless he is also a musician and unless as well as understanding and being able to read music he can play several instruments. For, when we think of it, during our leisure time we can find nothing more worth or commendable to help our bodies relax and our spirits recuperate, especially at Court where, besides the way in which music helps everyone to forget his troubles, many things are done to please the ladies, whose tender and gentle souls are very susceptible to harmony and sweetness.'" Baldessare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. George Bull (London: Prentice Hall, 1967), 94.

<sup>95</sup> Andrew Dell'Antonio, *Listening As Spiritual Practice in Early Modern Italy* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), 9.

teacher). His life-long tenure at a single court and his continued promotions with corresponding pay increases confirm this. He was able to achieve what few violinists (even his predecessor Uccellini) had been able to do: JOB SECURITY, through a combination of display of *ingegno* in his performance of virtuosity, and his ability to assist Francesco in the practice of performing his own *virtù*.

Colombi also functioned as a prized, collected object, whose work would have provided what Dell'Antonio calls the "discourse about" through which Francesco's courtiers could prove that they were interested in the Duke's passion for music. Colombi would have been expected to perform at functions such as meetings of the Duke's *Accademia de Dissonanza*, a group which he founded for the discussion of science, literature, art, and yes, music. Works like the "Tromba" or scordatura pieces would have amused and puzzled, stimulating discussion about the performance.<sup>96</sup> Francesco then had the perfect opportunity to display his superior *virtù*, with his insider knowledge, of his own virtuoso's secrets. So, through Colombi's performance of virtuosity he earned himself a place of privilege *at* the inner circle of royalty and nobility, but simultaneously not *in*. His very physicality also limited his ascendance. In displaying a singular prowess and presenting his body as virtuosic spectacle, Colombi precluded himself from being a performer of *virtù*.

Castiglione mentions repeatedly the importance of having someone to teach the courtier the habits and fashions of being a man of virtue at court, for while it must appear natural and effortless, there was nothing natural or effortless about it. "Therefore, as with other arts and skills so also with the virtues, it is necessary to have a master who by his teaching and precepts stirs and awakes the moral virtues whose seed is enclosed and buried in our souls, and who, like a good farmer, cultivates

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<sup>96</sup> Andrew Dell'Antonio, *Listening as Spiritual Practice*. (Berkeley: UC Press, 2011), 12-13. For examples of the seventeenth-century cantata presented as such topoi of displays of *virtù*. See also, Roger Freitas, "Singing and Playing: The Italian Cantata and the Rage for Wit" *Music & Letters*, 82:4 (Nov., 2001): 509-542.

and clears the way for them...”<sup>97</sup> He also writes “...although the potentiality for the virtues is rooted within our souls, it often fails to develop unless helped by education. For if it is to pass to actuality and to its full realization, it cannot, as I said, rely on Nature alone but needs the assistance of skillful practice and reason...”<sup>98</sup> Guazzo expresses a similar sentiment, one that is even closer to the task of Francesco’s displays: “True nobility is reached through constant work on oneself. The *institutio* of a gentleman is perennial, is never a given; it requires careful updating, and especially the study of an art as difficult in its fulfillment as it is hidden in its display.”<sup>99</sup>

The drastic edits in the F. 280 Sinfonia manuscripts reveal the lengths to which Colombi went to help fashion this performance of *virtù* for his student. And while the overall effect was that the skill seemed natural and automatic, the methodical nature of the changes pulls back the curtain to reveal how really artificial<sup>100</sup> this performance actually was.<sup>101</sup>

We are just beginning to learn how to think of the figures of music history as ordinary people. We like to think of Bach the exalted genius, but don’t really like to think of him as the junior high choir director. In early music, we (myself included) have focused on the exceptional cases who put themselves out there—through print—in a show of self-display. As historians, we’ve also been drawn, partly out of necessity, to those who sought to lay something down for Posterity. However, as we’ve seen in the case of Giuseppe Colombi, posterity and wide renown wasn’t always the main priority for an artist. More localized ambition and a restricted scope for performative spectacle was

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<sup>97</sup> Castiglione/Bull, 291

<sup>99</sup> Stefano Guazzo, *Il Civil Conversatione*, ed. Amadeo Quondam (Ferrara: Franco Cosimo Panini, 1993) I: liii, as quoted in Dell’Antonio, 97.

<sup>100</sup> The usage is not meant to connote negativity. Late 17<sup>th</sup> century and early 18<sup>th</sup> century people understood ‘artificial’ to mean something constructed according to the rules of art and science

<sup>101</sup> Giuseppe Colombi and Duke Francesco II D’Este both died the same year, 1694, after an over two-decade long relationship between patron and performer.

enough for some, who under the right circumstances were able to garner just as much success: Colombi climbed the Modenese Corporate ladder from *capo di instrumentisti* to *Maestro di Capella*.

But in musicology's pursuit of the evolutionary and memorializing, it seems that we've overlooked some of the truly remarkable accomplishments that composers/virtuosi like Colombi accomplished: job security, lifelong relationships, and not having to leave home to seek employment. In looking beyond the "poietic fallacy" we find not the development of works in progress, but of a life in music, one sketch at a time. It is a history that we are just now starting to discover and reconstruct.

## Intermedio

### *Musica Transalpina:*

#### Pictorial Virtuosity on both sides of the Alps

#### AUSTRIAN INFLUENCE IN MODENA

Neither Giuseppe Colombi, nor his predecessor Marco Uccellini, ever went north of the Alps as far as we know; yet both of them, and Colombi most strongly, reveal a distinct penchant for adapting many aspects of the Austrian virtuosic style into their works. Why would Modenese violinists in particular show a penchant for this kind of writing?

We do know that at least one Austrian violin sonata made its way into the Este personal manuscript library. Gregory Barnett has positively identified a previously anonymous manuscript as Johann Paul Westhoff's Sonata "alla Guerra," which was written up in *Mercure Galant* after Westhoff himself had performed it for Louis XIV in Paris in 1682.<sup>102</sup> While we don't know if Westhoff himself ever went to Italy, we do know that the Este court maintained close familial, political and cultural ties with Louis XIV's court through Cardinal Mazarin (Francesco II's great-uncle). Additionally, the great Austrian virtuoso Johann Jakob Walther spent much of the 1670's in Florence, and dedicated his *Scherzi da violino solo* to Cosimo III de Medici.

Northern violinists followed somewhat different kinds of career trajectories from their Italian counterparts, and their works reflect different influences. The Northern courts had an overall preference for more consort-style music, with a traditional scoring being a violin, two violas, violone

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<sup>102</sup> And the King himself evidently loved it so much that he requested to hear it again. See Gregory Barnett, *Bolognese Instrumental Music*, 150-151.

and continuo. The court in Dresden actually preferred contrapuntal or fugal music, more commonly associated in Italy with church services, to be played as table music.<sup>103</sup> This preference for a rich, thick sound seems to have carried over into the Austro-German violin virtuoso's use and display of chordal techniques. All four of the most prominent Austrian violin virtuosos, Heinrich Biber, Johann Schmelzter, Johann Jakob Walther and Johann Paul Westhoff, made extensive use of contrapuntal and chordal passages, keeping it as a core part of their expressions of virtuosity.

The hallmarks of the Austrian virtuosic playing were: a very flashy style featuring fast *passaggi* and high e-string position work, and a good deal of contrapuntal/chordal writing for the solo violin.<sup>104</sup> Perhaps most strikingly, the Austrians had a strong penchant for pictorial and descriptive works. Schmelzter's *Sonata Cucu*, Biber's *Sonata Representativa*, Walther's humorously titled *Serenata per un Coro di Violino, Organo Tremolante, Aria a Violino Solo, Chitarrino e Piva, Timpani, Tromba Lira, Harpa Smorzata, etc. per sonare di un violino solo*, were all written while Colombi was alive and working. Additionally, scordatura seemed to have been also quite the fashionable virtuosic technique as well, with Biber and Schmelzter experimenting extensively. Walther was aware of Biber enough to publish a critique of his over-use of Scordatura in the dedication page to his *Hortulus Chelicus* in 1688.<sup>105</sup>

I've already demonstrated that part of the violin's special cachet as an instrument was its imitative qualities. Giovanni Maria Doni extolled the violin's ability to present the best parts of just about every instrument available to seventeenth-century audiences, from the soft and sweet qualities of the flute, the contrapuntal ability of the organ, to the pathetic quality of the cornetto, etc.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Charles Brewer, *The Instrumental Music of Schmelzter, Biber, Muffat and their Contemporaries*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 55

<sup>104</sup> David D. Boyden, *The History of Violin Playing from its Origins to 1761* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 291.

<sup>105</sup> Charles Brewer, pg. 312

<sup>106</sup> The quotation from Giovanni Battista Doni, *Annotazioni sopra il Compendio d'Generi, de'Modi della Musica* (Rome: Andrea Fei, 1640), appears in Chapter One.

While the Austrians and Germans didn't directly deal in the language of *ingegno*, *inventione* and *meraviglia*, spectacle was a key part of their musical thinking, as we can clearly see in Athanasius Kircher's description of the *stylus phantasticus* from his *Musurgia Universalis* (Rome, 1650). :

“The Stylus phantasticus is appropriate to instruments. It is the most free and unfettered method of composition, bound to nothing, neither to words, nor to a harmonious subject. It is organized with regard to *manifest invention*, the hidden reason of harmony, and an *ingenious, skilled connection of harmonic phrases* and fugues. And it is divided into those pieces which are commonly called Phantasias, Ricercatas, Toccatas, and Sonatas.”<sup>107</sup> [Translated by Charles Brewer, emphasis mine]

The similarity is not fortuitous: Kircher's comments on the “fantastic style” of instrumental music were written after having spent significant time in Italy soaking up the *inventioni moderne* of the Papal courts; he writes later of having heard a private performance of a trio sonata by three of the top instrumentalists in Rome at the time: Michelangelo Rossi and Salvatore Mazzella, violinists, and Lelio Colista on theorbo.<sup>108</sup> In keeping with the norms of elite musical description discussed earlier, Kircher speaks of the nearly religious experience that he has in listening to the musician's performance of sonatas. Charles Brewer points out that Kircher's acknowledgment of the power of instrumental music was highly influential, as shortly after its publication *Musurgia Universalis* became one of the core texts at all Jesuit colleges and churches throughout Northern and Central Europe. Many late-seventeenth-century music theorists echoed Kircher's position. “The many title pages and prefaces of the printed editions from this period provide evidence that music was thought to have a power to make the most sacred rituals pleasing, and to allow even the most secular

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<sup>107</sup> “Phantasticus stylus aptus instrumentis, est liberrima, & solutissima componendi methodus, nullis nec verbis, ne subiecto harmonico adstruictus ad ostenandum ingenium, & abditam harmoniae rationem, ingeniosumque harmonicarum clausularum, fugarumque contextum docendum insistus, diviturque in eas, quas Phantasias, Ricercatas, Toccatas, Sonatas vulgo vocant.” Athanasius Kircher, *Musurgia Universalis* (Rome: 1650) A 585.

<sup>108</sup> Brewer, 43.

entertainments to be imbued with piety.”<sup>109</sup> As we will see, it is this blurring of the sacred-secular divide that Biber will draw on in the Mystery Sonatas.

Violin virtuosi working in the German-speaking lands often presented themselves at the center of mimetic spectacle. This wasn’t just the natives, but Italians working at the Northern Courts as well. Biagio Marini’s *Capriccio per sonare in modo di lira* from Op. 8 (discussed in Chapter 1) was printed while he was working for Duke Wolfgang Wilhelm Neuberg in Bavaria. Rebecca Cypress argues that Carlo Farina set the standard for pictorial imitation and representation through his *Capriccio Stravagante*, composed while working for Johann Georg I, elector of Saxony in Dresden. Farina’s *inventione* featured the first printed *col legno* bowing (where the player hits the string with the stick of the bow instead of the hair), glissandi, pizzicati, chords, and other even more experimental violin techniques, all in the service of imitating cats, hens, roosters, dogs, trumpets, a Turkish soldier band, flutes and more.<sup>110</sup> The example below is a section from the Cantus part, indicating “*Qui si bate con il legno da archetto sopra il corde*” (Here one hits the wood of the bow against the strings), followed by “Here provide the beat with the bow (hair).”

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<sup>109</sup> Brewer, 44

<sup>110</sup> Rebecca Cypress, “Die Natur un Kunst zu betrachten”: Carlo Farina’s *Capriccio stravagante* (1627) and the cultures of Collecting at the Court of Saxony.” *Musical Quarterly* 95 (2012):139-140.



Due to the fact that so many of the later Austrians copy these kinds of textures and musical representations, Aurelio Bianco argues for Farina’s influence on the later generations.<sup>111</sup>

Rebecca Cypress points out that in courts such as Dresden and Vienna, where there was a *Kunstkammer*, or royal museum collection of scientific and musical oddities, the virtuoso violinist positioned himself as the ultimate collectible and curiosity, worthy of keeping on the payroll.<sup>112</sup> Even here, we can see Kircher’s influence, as part of his *Musurgia Universalis* deals specifically with the musical representation of birds. Considering that Prince-Bishop Karl had a copy in his library at Kromeriz, where Biber was employed in the late 1660’s and early 1670’s, as well as the work’s dedication to Archduke Leopold Wilhelm of Vienna (Schmelzer’s employer), both virtuosos may well have known it.<sup>113</sup> So, even as Austrian virtuosos presented themselves as topics of the courtly “discourse about,” they were simultaneously displaying their own humanistic education with their

<sup>111</sup> Aurelio Bianco, <<Nach englischer und frantzösischer Art>>: *Vie et oeuvre de Carlo Farina*. (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2010), 9-15. A list of 14 pictorial violin works appears as an Appendix to this Dissertation.

<sup>112</sup> Rebecca Cypress, “Die Natur un Kunst zu betrachten”: Carlo Farina’s *Capriccio stravagante* (1627) and the cultures of Collecting at the Court of Saxony,” *Musical Quarterly* Volume 95 (March 2012):150-162.

<sup>113</sup> Brewer, 113.

references to Kircher's work. [See Example below, Athanasius Kircher, *Musurgia Universalis*, (Rome, 1650), pg 31]

Glottismi modulationum: sibilo exprimendi in Luscinia obseruati Iconismus III.  
fol. 30

The image displays a page from Kircher's *Musurgia Universalis* featuring musical notation for bird sounds. The top section, titled "Glottismi modulationum: sibilo exprimendi in Luscinia obseruati", contains seven staves of music with various rhythmic patterns and labels: Pigolismus, Glazismus, Teretismus, Pigolismus, Teretismus, Glazismus, and Chromatico-enharmonicum nescio. A note "quid affectans" is placed below the third staff. The bottom section, titled "Diuersarum uolucrum voces notis musicis expressa", illustrates five birds with their respective sounds: A (Cuculus), B (Gallina canorans pulchra), C (Gallina canorans pulchra), D (Coturnicis), and E (Cuculus). Each bird is accompanied by a musical staff showing its sound, such as "Gucu gucu gucu" for the Cuculus and "bikibik bikibik bikibik" for the Coturnicis.

It seems to have worked, for all four virtuosi had stable court positions, got multiple promotions and perks including ennoblement (Biber and Schmeltzer), opportunities to travel (Westhoff-Paris, Walther-Florence), and even passing on their positions to their children (Walther, Biber, Schmeltzer).

Peter Allsop claims that the only reason that the Italians weren't writing more of this kind of music was that they couldn't publish it as readily because of the antiquated letter-block printing system still in place in Venice, Bologna and Rome.<sup>114</sup> Piotr Wilk claims it is because the Italians valued a more cantabile, singing style of playing, aligning the violin more closely to the aesthetics of the voice than to the counterpoint of a keyboard instrument.<sup>115</sup>

There is truth to both of these theories, but it has to do with one aspect that neither scholar really discusses: that of the taste of the patrons who were paying for the music to be created and performed. We know that Prince-Bishop Karl Lichtenstein-Castelcorno in particular had a penchant for commissioning these pictorial works, requesting pieces by both Biber and Schmeltzer. Schmeltzer developed quite an international reputation, with surviving prints existing in Uppsala, Vienna, Paris, London, as well as Kromeriz.

Due to the circulation of manuscripts and prints, a violinist did not have to reside North of the Alps to absorb elements of Northern virtuosity. While David Boyden praised Marco Uccellini for essentially "inventing" high position work in his solo sonata writing (as high as g" on the e string),<sup>116</sup> this trait was already common in contemporary works by Schmeltzer and Walther. Uccellini also wrote a pictorial trio entitled "The wedding of the Hen and the Cuckoo" in his Op. 3 from 1642, dedicated to Francesco II's father, Alfonso IV. Even later, in 1701, Carl Ambrogio

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<sup>114</sup> Peter Allsop "Violinistic Virtuosity in the Seventeenth Century: Italian Supremacy or Austro-German Hegemony?" *Il saggiatore musicale*. Firenze: Olshki, (Volume 3, Issue no. 2 January, 1996): 233.

<sup>115</sup> Piotr Wilk, "Chordal playing in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Violin Repertoire." *Musica Iagellonica* (Krakow, 2004): 169.

<sup>116</sup> David Boyden, *History of Violin Playing from Its Origins to 1761*, 110.

Lonati, a colleague of Arcangelo Corelli in Rome, sent a collection of solo sonata manuscripts to the Elector at Dresden, which included extensive use of double-stops and scordatura, techniques which are not extant in his manuscript works for Roman courts.<sup>117</sup>

Giuseppe Colombi's works even more closely reflect elements of the Austrian style, with the chordal writing exemplified in the Mus. F 280 sonatas, a series of Pictorial Tromba pieces which I will discuss shortly, and several dances in *scordatura*. Did Francesco II find out about the latest Austrian styles by receiving a copy of Westhoff's sonata from Paris, and request Colombi to create works to mimic the Austrians? Did the cosmopolitan George Muffat, trained in Paris and employed in Salzburg, stop by en route Rome to investigate the latest Italian trends, for some balsamic vinegar, tortellini, and sharing of virtuosic knowledge? It will be necessary to examine court records and other anonymous pieces in the Modena collection which may provide more direct evidence. But for now, we have the significant musical traces that Colombi left behind.

## **THE BIZZARERIE**

In the Estense manuscript collection including the folio Mus E. 282 and Mus. F 283 are the pieces called "bizzarerie" by Gregory Barnett: dance movements written in scordatura, imitative "tromba" pieces, and difficult contrapuntal fugal writing—the likes of which wouldn't been seen in print in Italy until Corelli's Op. 5 as well as the use of up-bow staccato discussed in Chapter 2. As I have also discussed there, these pieces appear from the manuscripts to be specifically intended for personal performance by the composer.

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<sup>117</sup> Brewer, 342.

The “bizzarrie” are all for solo violin unaccompanied, with no basso continuo. While much of the utilitarian dance music, Sinfonias, and Sonatas in these manuscripts are for at least two voices, which probably included cellist Domenico Gabrielli<sup>118</sup> or *sotto maestro* Giovanni Battista Vitali,<sup>119</sup> this handful of boutique pieces remains unaccompanied. Each of these pieces puts the violinist’s body and instrument on display in unique and bizarre ways, often disfiguring the instrument and obscuring the normal virtuosic properties of the violin in favor of the showcasing of invention.

In the “Tromba a Violino solo del Colombi” from Mus. E 282, Colombi creates trumpet effects by outlining and limiting himself to the pitches of a D-Major triad. D Major is one of the most sonorous keys for the violin, and not incidentally, one of the few keys that a trumpet at that time could play in. He opens with an ascending triad punctuated by trills and repeated eighth-notes on the D-major triad notes, creating a bright fanfare-like gesture. He plays with the triadic fanfare figure, making ample use of the open D-string, and indicating dynamic contrast between piano and forte sections as the fanfares ascend and then descend to cadence on open D. These echo effects also mimic the dynamic and articulation changes that are analogous to different ways in which trumpets can vary their utterances.

The fanfares are followed by a triple minuet-like section in two-part form. It’s as if the violin’s “trumpet” had announced the processional of a royal personage, and the minuet provides the space to clear for the Royal Personage to essay the first dance in the center of his own ballroom. Here, Colombi uses chords, still continuously in D-major, to allude to the sound of trumpets playing in thirds and sixths; and again he plays with dynamic contrast.

In the third movement, Colombi’s ‘trumpet’ appears to have been infected by the violin: he transforms the trumpet fanfare motive with heavy degrees of *bariolage* across all the strings, with

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<sup>118</sup> Gabrielli was hired specifically as a virtuoso cellist from 1688 until his untimely death in 1690, and his solo *Ricercari* reflect a similar level of virtuosity for his instrument, relative to current technique, as Colombi’s works do for the violin. See Gregory Barnett, *Bolognese Instrumental Music*, 144-145.

<sup>119</sup> John Suess “Giuseppe Colombi’s Dance Music,” 141.

constant alternation in measures 41-44. This is showy without actually being difficult. It is, however, not something a trumpet would (or could) do. Colombi follows it with register switching in measures 47-51, perhaps to make it sound like two trumpets playing antiphonally. Just as suddenly as he began them, Colombi brings the violin/trumpet fanfares to a cadence, and reverts back to the minuet, this time with nearly the entire binary form in double-stop chords, as if the two imaginary trumpets had come together for a duet.

In the next fanfare, Colombi pulls out all the stops, quickly switching between piano and forte, slurred and separate bowing, dramatic arpeggio string crossings, chords, and last, *battuto-staccato* in up- and down-bow triplets, alternated with quick slurred triplet figures. All this busyness shows a high degree of *ingegno* (not to mention bow control) on the part of the performer. [Full Score is located in the Intermedio Appendix]

Colombi closes the Tromba by reverting back to the minuet, with fewer chords than before; he marks the last phrases *piano*, and then finally *più piano*. The trumpets seemingly fade off into the distance, and the virtuoso calmly tucks his secrets back into his bag of tricks, letting his audience marvel at the dynamic juxtapositions they had just witnessed.

## Chapter 3:

### *Performing Faith:*

#### Scordatura, Meditation, and the Violinist in Heinrich Biber's Rosary Sonatas

##### **The Case of the “Mystery” Manuscript**

Bayerische Staatsbibliothek: Music Manuscript 4123, commonly known as *The Rosary or Mystery Sonatas*, has presented scholars with numerous questions, or even “mysteries.”<sup>120</sup> The manuscript was unaccounted for until it came into the possession of music collector Karl Franz Emil von Schafhaufl (1803-1890); after his death it passed to the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich, Germany. The first published version was edited by Erwin Lutz (Vienna: Artaria, 1905).

The manuscript contains fifteen sonatas for solo violin and continuo, and one passacaglia for unaccompanied violin. Each sonata is preceded by a small engraving of one of the 15 decades of the mysteries of the rosary, which are based upon events in the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary. The final solo passacaglia is accompanied by an engraving of a guardian angel figure. The manuscript exists in presentation form, with elegant handwriting and extra attention to detail evident by the inclusion of the pictures. What is unique is that the included pictures appear to be printed, not drawn, creating a hybrid presentation of print and manuscript. The title page has been lost, but the dedicatory letter written by Biber to Archbishop Maximilian Gandolph has been preserved. However, Biber gives neither the title of the collection, nor the date of its dedication, leading scholars to puzzle over exactly when it was given to the Archbishop and when it was created or

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<sup>120</sup> The most recent new name has been proposed by Charles Brewer, calling them the *Mystery Partitas*, since he argues their use of so many dance movements situates them much closer to the genre of the Partita than the Sonata. See: Charles Brewer, *The Instrumental Music of Schmelzger, Biber, Muffat and their Contemporaries*. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 298-316.

compiled. Erwin Luntz, the editor of the first modern edition, originally proposed the date of 1676 on violinistic grounds, as the collection's overall use of upper-position work was less than Biber's *Sonatae tam aris, quam aulis* (Salzburg, 1676) and *Sonatae* (Nuremberg, 1681).<sup>121</sup> While that has been the traditional accepted date ever since, Charles Brewer has used analysis of the paper on which it was written, as well as surviving correspondence between Biber and the Archbishop, to suggest that it could be a few years later in the 1680's, when Biber had risen in rank to Vice-Kapellmeister and then Kapellmeister.<sup>122</sup> However, it can't be any later than 1687, which was the year Maximilian died.

### **Between Score and Scordatura**

Biber's dedication letter to Prince-Archbishop Maximilian may be translated as follows:

“O Most Noble and Reverend Prince, Lord, Lord Most Compassionate, I dedicate to You, the third light, the consecrated harmony of the sun of justice and the immaculate moon that you humbly received from both by divine illumination. Truly a son shining with sacred dignity<sup>123</sup>, you, a virgin, defend the virginal honor of the mother. Therefore, for a reward from Christ the son, you are fed the manna of heaven; you are suckled by the Mother Mary with mercies. Taking that first letter from her most blessed name, you set it as the first in Your Most Noble Name; thus Mary honored Maximilian.

You will discover that my lyre with four strings is discordantly prepared in fifteen alterations and elaborated with persistence, diligence and with great artifice according to their potentiality with various sonatas, preludes, allemandes, courants, sarabands,

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<sup>121</sup> Eric T. Chafe, *The Church Music of Heinrich Biber* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987), 186.

<sup>122</sup> Brewer, 300. Brewer postulates, and I agree with him, that one of the reasons that Biber did not use such extensive upper position work as in other compositions was due to the nature of the scordatura. The nature of the notation correlating to a fingerboard position instead of pitches would change and unnecessarily complicate the execution of the sonatas.

<sup>123</sup> The pun (“son shining”) is only in English.



the entire violin music repertoire.<sup>124</sup>

Questions still remain as to how these elements of scordatura, mysteries and the sonatas actually intersect. While Biber's own words in his dedicatory preface to the manuscript indicate that he intended these works in honor of the fifteen mysteries, or events, of the rosary, many of the sonatas are seemingly unrelated to their corresponding decade in any imitative or descriptive way. Instead, they are filled with repetitive musical forms such as theme and variations, dances with doubles, as well as other repetitive ground-bass dances like the ciaccona and passacaglia. More peculiar is that despite the fact that Biber addresses this presentation manuscript to the Archbishop, thus inviting *meraviglia* in the reader and recognition and respect for the composer's *ingegno*, the violin part is written in "hand-grip" (tablature-like) notation. This means that the notes on the page actually obscure the pitch content from the "reader" of the collection.<sup>125</sup> Therefore, while the Archbishop (not to mention modern-day audiences), would have been amazed at the sheer level of difficulty and creativity in crafting such a difficult *concerto* in the abstract, the sonatas in the volume must be performed for the manuscript score to have made any sonic sense to the viewer/listener. Even then, while at times the performance of the altered tunings provides dramatic aural experiences for the audience, at other times, especially in the hands of a virtuoso performer, the scordatura effects are hardly audible at all.

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<sup>124</sup> Brewer, 306.

<sup>125</sup> See example below from Sonata XI: The Resurrection, illustrating the disconnect between notation and sound.



This doubly obscured link between text and act reminds us that the “work” was not on the page, but in the experience of the execution of the written directions. To push this further, the question of *who* can hear and fully experience these scordatura effects asks the question of whom the Rosary Sonatas are intended for in the first place. To what degree does the use of scordatura here exist for the spectator’s benefit? These pieces invite modes of analysis that combine Biber’s virtuosic, compositional and devotional training, deepening our notions of performance and practice.

In search of the analytical mode that can best explain this music, I will explore the elements of meditation embodied in a violinist’s practice of performing Biber’s *Rosary Sonatas*. I argue that these pieces can be understood as a multi-sensory experience that offers unique and differing perspectives for the audience and the performer. Through his extensive use of repetition and scordatura, Biber provides the listener with new sonic experiences—but, perhaps more importantly,

he uses these sonatas to create a ritual space that forces the violinist to alter his instrument, body, and mind in a manner that is akin to the practice of Rosary meditation itself.

### **Between Musical Practice and Spiritual Practice**

Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber, like many of the Italian violinists already discussed in this dissertation, used his virtuosity in order to achieve social ascendance for himself and his family. He managed to have nearly as stable a career and as successful an employer-patron relationship as Giuseppe Colombi, earning promotion after promotion, and securing lifetime security for himself and his family. He was born the son of a huntsman and game-keeper in Wartenberg, Bavaria, earning a court position as lowly chamber valet in 1660's in Kromeriz under Prince-Bishop Karl Lichtenstein-Castelcorno, and then in Salzburg in 1669 under Prince-Archbishop Maximilian Galdalph von Khuenberg. He remained in Salzburg for the rest of his life and continued his social ascendance, being promoted to Vice-Kapellmeister in 1679, to Kapellmeister in 1684, and finally *Truchsess*, or Lord High Steward, in 1692.<sup>126</sup> After performing for Emperor Leopold I in 1677, Biber was knighted and given the patent of nobility by the Emperor Himself, awarding him the additional title of “von Bibern,” a fact that was published in the city. This in turn allowed for his daughters to qualify for entry into the prestigious convent of Nonnberg, where they too had musical careers.<sup>127</sup>

Biber was most likely trained in the 1660s at a Jesuit gymnasium in Bohemia, probably the one at Opava, a town about 200 miles northwest of Vienna. While many details about his early life are unknown, we do know he was in contact with musicians from Opava and other Jesuit gymnasias at that time,<sup>128</sup> including Pavel Vejvanovsky, who was studying with Jesuits in Troppau.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Eric Chafe. *The Church Music of Heinrich Biber*. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1991), 21.

<sup>127</sup> Biber's daughter Anna Magdalena was a gifted violinist and singer in her own right and went on to teach and direct the music at Nonnberg. Brewer, 265.

<sup>128</sup> Elias Dunn and Jiri Sehnal. “Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber” *Grove Music Online* ed. Laura Macy: [www.grovemusic.com](http://www.grovemusic.com), (accessed 1 April 2013)

Vejanovsky was also Kapellemeister at Prince-Bishop Karl Liechtenstein-Castelcorno's court at Kromeriz when Biber was employed there in the mid 1660's. Even much later, Biber maintained ties and working relationships with the Jesuit community in Salzburg, providing yearly dramatic music for the Jesuit schools' dramas.<sup>130</sup>

During the seventeenth century, a Jesuit education meant a broad humanistic as well as spiritual and musical training—even for a lowly violinist. With its focus on the pursuit of knowledge and science for the refinement of religious belief, not to mention the use of art to inspire and overwhelm in pursuit of spiritual experience, Jesuit training would have given Biber a theological background for the kind of work he does in the *Rosary Sonatas*.

It is worth noting that Biber's middle names, Ignaz and Franz, were not on his birth certificate.<sup>131</sup> However, he was using both names by the times of his publications in Salzburg and his dedication page for the Rosary Sonatas. This addition of the names of both of the founders of the Jesuit order-- St. Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier-- certainly suggests Biber's increased awareness of and affinity with the movement..

St. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, first published in Rome in 1548, were at the core of the Jesuit system. This systematic, month-long 'program' for spiritual betterment focused on repetitive processes, inward meditation, vivid visualization and contemplation in a very visceral, multi-sensory, experiential way. Through extended work with a spiritual guide, daily practice in the process of personal introspection, any individual could deepen their personal connection with the Divine. "By Spiritual Exercises [it means] every way of examining one's conscience, of meditating, of contemplating, of praying vocally and mentally, and of performing other spiritual actions... For as

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<sup>129</sup> Elias Dunn and Jiri Sehnal. "Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber" *Grove Music Online* ed. Laura Macy: [www.grovemusic.com](http://www.grovemusic.com), (accessed 1 April 2013)

<sup>130</sup> Unfortunately, save for a few balletti, almost none of this music has survived. Chafe, *Church Music of Heinrich Biber*, pg. 20.

<sup>131</sup> Chafe, 1.

strolling, walking and running are bodily exercises, so every way of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all the disordered tendencies, and after it is rid, to seek and find the Divine Will... is called a Spiritual Exercise.”<sup>132</sup> In the exercises, everyday actions, including basics of the human condition such as clothing oneself and eating, are reframed in such a way that the practitioner can use them to connect with the project of the cleansing of the soul. The goal is to be able to turn one’s everyday actions into a process of introspection.

These visceral experiences in the pursuit of the Divine often come in the form of guided meditation on a topic or an experience, such as this example, an excerpt from the “Fifth Exercise, a meditation on Hell:”

**Prayer:** Let the Preparatory Prayer be the usual one.

**First Prelude:** The first Prelude is the composition, which is here to see with the sight of the imagination the length, breadth and depth of Hell...

**First Point:** The First Point will be to see with the sight of the imagination the great fires, and the souls as in bodies of fire.

**Second Point:** The Second, to hear with tears wailings, howlings, cries, blasphemies against Christ our Lord and against all His Saints.

**Third Point:** The Third, to smell with the smell smoke, sulfur, dregs and putrid things.

**Fourth Point:** The Fourth, to taste with the taste bitter things, like tears, sadness and the worm of conscience.

**Fifth Point:** The Fifth, to touch with the touch; that is to say, how the fires and burn the souls.<sup>133</sup>

Additionally, one of the core tenets of the visualization process are a set of meditations on the Holy Mysteries of the Rosary: key events in the life of Christ and the Virgin. Just as in the rest of the exercises, the practitioner is given specific focal points to guide their private meditations.

Through these kinds of suggested stimuli and points of focus, practitioners go through a guided creative personal process, and develop a disciplined spiritual *practice*, not just a belief, but a belief

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<sup>132</sup> Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*. trans. Father Elder Mullan, S.J., (New York: PJ Kenedy, & Sons, 1914), IHS Annotations: First Annotation, 12.

<sup>133</sup> Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*. trans. Father Elder Mullan, S.J., (New York: PJ Kenedy, & Sons, 1914), IHS Annotations: First Annotation, 12.

*system*—filled with studies for self development and betterment. Through his exposure to and presumable training in teachings like this, Biber would have had the necessary spiritual and intellectual basis for creating a complex set of pieces, in fact exercises, like the *Rosary Sonatas*.

In 1671, Biber entered the service of Prince-Archbishop Maximilian Gandolph von Khuenberg (1622-1687), in Salzburg. Apparently he took this post while still in the employ of Prince-Bishop Karl Lichenstein-Castelcorno at Kromeriz who had sent him to Absam to pick up new violins from the great luthier Jacob Stainer. What is interesting about this anecdote is it is one of the few times we actually have a listing of the kinds of instruments that a virtuoso was using. The records indicate that Biber, after taking his new position of “valet de chamber” in Maximilian’s court, immediately “ordered a new discant [sic] violin from the aforementioned violin-maker, and recently he has sent along a Cremonese violin to be repaired...”<sup>134</sup> leaving us just enough information to be able to hope that he was lucky enough to own both a Stradivari and a Stainer violin.

Biber started in Salzburg at one of the lowest court musician posts available to him, but by 1684, with the death of the previous Kapellmeister Andreas Hofer, Biber was installed as his replacement, beating out rival violinist George Muffat. Salzburg was unique in the political structure of Austria, in that the city-state was virtually autonomous; Maximilian was the head of both sacred and secular affairs of the city.<sup>135</sup> This duality of the Archbishop’s position enabled Biber to compose both sacred and secular music for the same employer.

Archbishop von Khuenberg was not only a connoisseur of string music, but also a proponent of Marian worship and founder of the Salzburg rosary confraternity in Salzburg, which met in the Aula Academica. This room was specially decorated with images of the events of the Mysteries for confraternity meetings. Additionally, we know Max Gandolph lavished his court with

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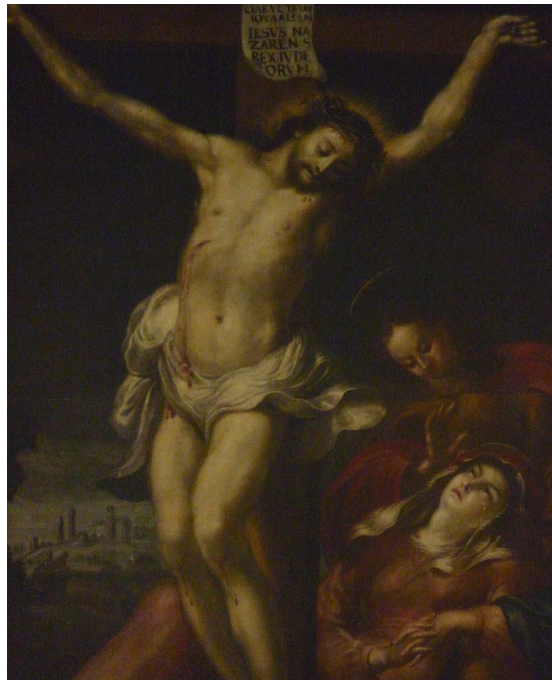
<sup>134</sup> letter dated January 3, 1671, from Johann Kuen von Auer to Thomas Sartorius. Translated by Charles Brewer, *Instrumental Music of Schmeltzer, Biber, Muffat and their Contemporaries*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 238.

<sup>135</sup> Charles Brewer, 237.

significant musical resources and special church services in honor of Rosary Month (October).<sup>136</sup>

Additionally, recent work has been done which matches the printed engravings in the *Rosary Sonatas* to matching documents for the Salzburg rosary confraternity.<sup>137</sup>

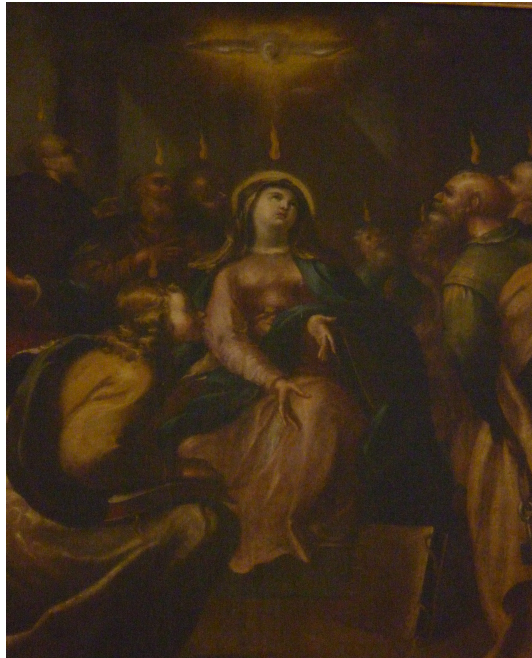
The images below are close-ups from two of the “mystery” paintings lining the walls of the Aula Academica. The top is from the Mystery X: The Crucifixion, and the second from Mystery XIII: The Descent of the Holy Spirit. [Photos Courtesy of Julia Wedman]



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<sup>136</sup> Eric Chafe, 186.

<sup>137</sup> James Clements, “Instrumental Fantasy in the Habsburg Lands,” *Early Music* (2012): 1-2.



Unfortunately we do not have any record of Biber performing these sonatas at any Confraternity meetings. However, we shouldn't be too surprised to find no specific mention of him. To specifically acknowledge Biber's name and individual performances would be to give too much agency to a violinist, even one as highly regarded and valued as Biber, and such description would actually have been demeaning for his noble *confratres*.<sup>138</sup> "Ultimately, seventeenth-century elite non-musicians would just as likely have rejected language that modern scholars might consider to be 'accurately' musico-descriptive, considering it either inappropriate to their nonprofessional status or ineffective in conveying what was truly important about their engagement with music."<sup>139</sup>

We can surmise that the Rosary Sonatas would not have been played in a liturgical setting,

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<sup>138</sup> Even Athanasius Kircher, who wrote in such detail of the science of music, does not mention names or techniques when describing his experience of listening to private concert of violinists in Rome: only how it made him feel and the religious devotion it inspired. "For truly, I saw that I, being borne by my guardian genius of the ethereal breeze, was lead to the Moon, to Venus, to the remaining planets, to the fixed stars themselves..." See Charles Brewer, 43.

<sup>139</sup> Andrew Dell'Antonio. *Listening As Spiritual Practice*. Los Angeles: University of California, 2010, 5.

because their inclusion of dance movements would have made them inappropriate for public church performance. Similar examples, such as Khunau's *Biblische Historien* (Leipzig, 1700), also contain dance music, but in this case a title page engraving suggests domestic performance and a context of private devotion.<sup>140</sup>

### **Biber and the Problem of Pictorialism**

Even amidst the myriads of harps, birds, bells and whistles that infest Austrian violin sonatas, Biber's particular *ingenium* stands out. In the *Serenada a 5* "Der Nachtwechter," (1673) he instructs the violone player to put down his instrument for the middle Ciaccona of the six-movement serenade, and literally serenade his audience by singing a song, "Lost Ihr Herrn un Last euch sagn," the typical tune of the local nightwatchman. In his *Battaglia* (1673), Biber experiments with everything from a very early "Bartok"-style snap-pizzicato (where the string is pulled so hard that it slaps the fingerboard and rebounds off); putting paper in between the strings and fingerboard of the violone so it makes a rattling snare drum sound; and throwing all pleasantries of harmony aside, having all the performers play different tunes in a dissonant quodlibet, to imitate the sounds of a crowd of drunk soldiers singing.<sup>141</sup>

So, against this rowdy backdrop, the Mystery Sonatas stand in stark contrast. Biber obviously had the creativeness and ingenuity to come up with non-traditional ways to pictorialize the sounds of the Mysteries and yet he chose not to, for the most part. These sonatas fall far short of the degree of pictorialism that scholars and listeners in the modern era expect in a "programmatic work." Biber does employ musical pictorialism in them, but the instances are few and far between. They are also striking and beautiful, as in the clanging of violent chordal "hammer strokes" in the opening of Sonata X "The Crucifixion" (see the score example below) the evocative (if not

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<sup>140</sup> Brewer, 314.

<sup>141</sup> Charles Brewer, 316

Biblically correct) trumpet fanfares in the Sonata XII, “The Ascension,” and the reverberant echo effects alluding to the empty tomb in Sonata XI, “The Resurrection.”



The tradition of pictorialisms in Biber’s and his contemporaries’ virtuosic writing might lead us to try to wedge in the kind of 1:1 mimetic relationships that exist in the Cuckoo sonatas; but unsuccessfully. Eric Chafe admits, after wrestling with the problem of programmaticism in the *Rosary Sonatas*, that

Attempts—some more persuasive than others—have been made to reveal connections between music and program in many of the sonatas. But in many cases that has proven to be very difficult, if not impossible. If these works were intended by Biber to represent more than what is conveyed by mood alone, that fact has yet to be convincingly demonstrated and may be doubted in light of the literal character of some of Biber’s program effects in other compositions.<sup>142</sup>

William Newman, in his survey of the sonata genre states, “Except in rare instances and contrary to some references to them, [the *Rosary Sonatas*] are not programmatic in the more literal sense of Kuhnau’s *Biblical Sonatas* 25 years later. At most they are symbolic in the sense that Bach’s

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<sup>142</sup> Eric Chafe, *The Church Music of Heinrich Biber*. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan), 187-188.

organ chorale preludes are.”<sup>143</sup> In what is, at the time of this dissertation, the most recent book on Biber’s music, Charles Brewer points to the varied uses of key structures in the scordatura elements of the Mystery sonatas, but then finally comes to a similar conclusion “What is more difficult to define in these fifteen compositions is how Biber addressed the symbolic and programmatic aspects implied by his dedication and the engravings before each partita.”<sup>144</sup>

In all previous scholarly works, the frame of reference has often been so focused on the pictures, sounds and events in the engravings, that scholars have seemed to lose track of one overarching element of this collection: the Rosary and the meditative nature of the Mysteries themselves, and the fact that Rosary and Mystery Meditation is not a story book, but a series of prayers and a process of guided meditation. I propose an alternative to the problematic attempt to explain these sonatas through pictorialism, and argue that the *Rosary Sonatas* are meant to evoke the performative process and corporeal experience of reciting the stations of the Rosary itself.

### **The Process of Rosary Prayer and Meditation**

In rosary prayer, the practitioner speaks a series of very repetitive prayers while meditating on each individual event. But before one can even begin to meditate on the actual decades or mysteries, one first makes the sign of the cross and speaks the Apostle’s Creed. Then, one says one *Pater Noster*, three *Ave Marias*, and one *Gloria Patri*. After that, the devotee can then begin the meditation of each rosary, which begins with a *Pater Noster*, a brief statement of the name of the Rosary/Mystery event, also known as a decade (for example “The First Mystery: The Annunciation”), ten *Ave Marias*, and closing with one *Gloria Patri*. The worshipper then moves on to the next decade, and the next, and so on, repeating the entire cycle five times. As one says the prayers, one moves the fingers along the rosary beads. The rosary beads are used as a memory aid to

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<sup>143</sup> William S. Newman, *The Sonata in the Baroque Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 217-218.

<sup>144</sup> Brewer, 307.

keep track of where in the prayer sequence one is, freeing the mind to further meditate on the mystery and on one's own personal devotion. The use of repetition as a devotional aid, as exemplified in the rosary, has been used for centuries as a way of intensifying the meditative experience and helps bring the devotee into a state of contemplation on the Divine.<sup>145</sup>

Rosary Text-English	Rosary Text-Latin
<p><b>Sign of the Cross</b> In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen</p>	<p><b>Signum Crucis</b> In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.</p>
<p><b>Apostles Creed</b> I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; He descended into hell; the third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.</p>	<p><b>Symbolum Apostolorum</b> Credo in Deum Patrem omnipotentem, Creatorem caeli et terrae; et in Iesum Christum, Filium eius unicum, Dominum nostrum; qui conceptus est de Spiritu Sancto, natus ex Maria Virgine; passus sub Pontio Pilato, crucifixus, mortuus, et sepultus; descendit ad infernos; tertia die resurrexit a mortuis; ascendit ad caelos, sedet ad dexteram Dei Patris omnipotentis; inde venturus est iudicare vivos et mortuos. Credo in Spiritum Sanctum; Sanctam Ecclesiam Catholicam; Sanctorum communionem; remissionem peccatorum; carnis resurrectionem; vitam aeternam. Amen.</p>
<p><b>The Lord's Prayer (Our Father)</b> Our Father Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but</p>	<p><b>Oratio Dominicae (Pater noster)</b> Pater noster, qui es in caelis, sanctificetur Nomen Tuum. Adveniat regnum Tuum, fiat voluntas Tua, sicut in caelo et in terra. Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie, et dimitte nobis debita nostra, sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris, et ne nos inducas in tentationem, sed libera nos a malo. Amen.</p>

<sup>145</sup> There has actually been an Italian medical study which traces the repetitive prayers of the Rosary and yoga mantra prayers to the physiological effect it has on the breathing heart rates of practitioners, in which they found that the prayers and repetition decreased their breath rate, and their baroreflex sensitivity and increased circulation to the brain. See Leonardo Bernardi, *Beyond Science? Effect of rosary prayer and yoga mantras on autonomic cardiovascular rhythms: comparative study*. *BMJ* 2001;323:1446-1449 (22-29 December) For a musicological exploration of this repetitive process expressed in music, see: Susan McClary's chapter "The Social History of a Groove: Chacona, Ciaccona, Chaconne, and the Chaconne." *Desire and Pleasure in Seventeenth-Century Music*. (Los Angeles: University of California, 2012): 193-214.

deliver us from evil. Amen	
<b>The Angelic Salutation (Hail Mary)</b> <i>[Pray three times]</i> Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.	<b>Salutatio Angelica (Ave Maria)</b> <i>[Pray three times]</i> Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum; Benedicta tu in mulieribus et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus. Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.
<b>The Minor Doxology (Glory Be)</b> Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.	<b>Doxologia Minor (Gloria Patri)</b> Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto, sicut erat in principio, et nunc et semper, et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

## INTENSIFICATION THROUGH REPETITION

In order to render this process in music, Biber uses traditional musical forms to simulate the repetitive nature of rosary prayer and meditation throughout the sixteen *Rosary Sonatas*. He utilizes the structures of “Theme and Variations” for Sonatas I, VII, X, XI, XIV, and XV. This framework allows for a gradual buildup of intensity over a short theme, as if with each repetition, the meditation were becoming increasingly fervent. For Sonatas III, V, VII, VIII, IX, and XII, Biber uses dances in traditional binary form, with each section repeated. To each dance Biber adds on a Double, in which the dance is repeated with virtuosic divisions, creating another kind of intensifying structure. In other sonatas, like Sonatas IV and XVI, Biber utilizes the ciaccona and passacaglia; these forms are based on a simple four bar harmonic structure, which is then built upon and developed in increasing layers of complexity and virtuosity.<sup>146</sup>

Even where there isn’t a structural repetition, sonatas such as VI and XIII contain meditative

<sup>146</sup> The Four notes of the descending tetrachord also happen to correspond with the first four notes of a hymn to the guardian angel, whose feast was on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, the same month as rosary feasts. Peter Holman, “Mystery Man: Peter Holman celebrates the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Heinrich Biber.” *The Musical Times*, (July 1994), 438.

affects infused with repetitive motives. For example, Sonata VI, “The Agony in the Garden,” while it is a through-composed movement with no repeats or other formal repetitive structures, is based almost entirely on a single descending triadic motive, repeated in different registers on the violin. While there aren’t clearly labeled “*variatio*” or variations, the sonata is divided into two halves that each start simply but then build in intensity and complexity: a kind of free variation.

What Biber often does in the *Rosary Sonatas* is to create a kind of hybrid between purely repetitive structures and pictorial sections. He will provide some sort of brief prelude or vivid introduction, such as the sounds of pounding of nails in the opening of Sonata X, pointed out by Chafe,<sup>147</sup> or the “echoes” of the empty tomb in Sonata XI. But this is only a brief presentation of musical images before the repetitive, meditative structures take over for the remainder of the sonata.

In the meditative tradition of Rosary devotional books, it was not unusual for a devotee to impart his or her own imagining of what kind of images or sounds they might experience in their own personal exercises or devotions. In fact, as we saw in the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius encourages using the imagination to create one’s own personal connection. Ignatius’ process in the *Spiritual Exercises* correlates to both the processes at work in the Rosary Prayer and in Biber’s *Sonatas*. He even names the opening images and thoughts for each Exercise the “Prelude,” following it with a set of points that dwell upon and develop the topic.

A good example of Biber’s use of music in a manner analogous to the *Exercises*, imparting his own, imaginative take on a fixed topic, is the “Intrada” movement from Sonata XII, “The Ascension.” There’s no mistaking the sound of the violin imitating trumpet fanfares, but there’s no mention of trumpets in the Bible verses that describe Christ’s ascension into heaven.

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward

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<sup>147</sup> Chafe, 189-190.

heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall come in the like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.<sup>148</sup>

In fact, the verses are quite brief in describing Jesus rising into the air, being covered by a cloud, and two figures asking the disciples what they're looking at. Rather than representing or depicting the verse, Biber presents his own version of what he envisions this scene *sounding* like: evidently, for him, the ascent into glory involved trumpets.

**Intrada**

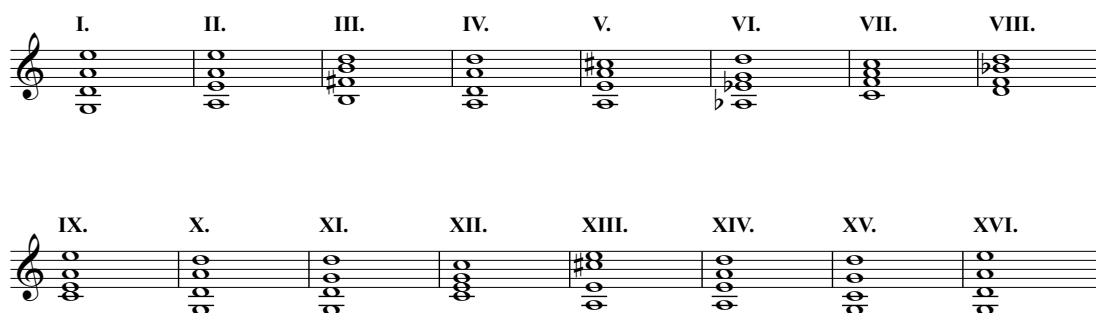
### The “Discordantly Prepared Lyre”: Biber’s Scordatura

What is most remarkable and puzzling about the *Rosary Sonatas* from the standpoint of imitation and representation, however, is the extensive use of scordatura. Out of the sixteen *Rosary*

<sup>148</sup> Acts 1:9-11 (King James Version)

*Sonatas*, fourteen feature this radical technique. Fifteen *Sonatas* are based on the Rosary, and the last is accompanied by an engraving of a guardian angel. [See the example below] Such an extensive use of the process had never been seen before in violin music, and indeed has never been seen since.

While the form of notation resembles tablature, which was a standard form of notation for both guitar and lute at the time, it was foreign to violin writing and had never caught on (it's called "hand grip" notation by some manuals<sup>149</sup>). In practice, it actually makes the process of playing the sonatas easier, once the violin is properly detuned for the appropriate scordatura, but until that point where the instrument begins to *sound*, whatever is on the page is best considered a geographical map of instructions, rather than a score of sounding notes.



If the *Rosary Sonatas* are played on a normally tuned violin as notated, the sonatas do not make any sense, harmonically or melodically. However, when the violinist then plays the notes as written on a "properly" DE-tuned instrument, suddenly the correct pitches will sound. The violinist, in essence, has to take a "leap of faith," trusting that what looks like nonsense on the page sounds pleasing to the ear.

<sup>149</sup> Judy Tarling, *Baroque String Playing for Ingenious Learners*. (St. Albans, UK: Corda Music, 2000), 196-202.



I must stress here the importance of the act of performance in this process. Without the violinist actually picking up his instrument and investing in the time and effort to perform the actions required, the “mysteries” of the scordatura remain unrevealed. It is through the process of corporeal experience that the actions of the performer, undertaken through faith in the knowledge of the composer, that the music is realized.

The process of scordatura alters the sounding body of the violin and transforms the resonating acoustics in interesting and—I propose—sometimes symbolic ways. The most dramatic example is Sonata XI, “The Resurrection,” where the violin is tuned in octaves and the D and A strings are switched, literally making the shape of the Cross behind the bridge, and above the nut of the violin. This creates a situation where the string in the D-string spot is actually higher in pitch than the string in the A-string location—a reversal of all normal string orders: “So the last shall be



first, and the first last.”<sup>150</sup>

In fact, if we include the body of the violinist, this tuning completes the symbolism of the three crosses of Golgotha, with the grandest one in the middle: that of the bow perpendicular to the strings, enacting the large cross, while the crossed strings make the two smaller crosses flanking it “And when they came to the right place, which is called Calvary, they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left...” (Luke 23:33)).

In terms of the visuals of the printed part and the violinist’s experience of playing from it, everything is backwards. The smooth-looking descending “scales” on the page actually sound as though they’re jumping around by fourth, whereas disjunct-looking passages sound in a smooth diatonic descent. In the echo passages, confusion and estrangement ensue: In order to play the notated figures the violinist’s bow has to go to the upper string to play the lower note, and then to the lower string to play the upper note. Meanwhile, on the page it looks like it should sound exactly opposite. When a performer attempts it for the first time, her arm does not want not to go the direction it is being told to go, as the visual cues go directly against the sonic ones, throwing into crisis 20 years of training. All the way through the opening of the sonata, the violinist’s reality has

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<sup>150</sup> (KJV Matthew 20:16).

been completely turned upside down, forcefully made into a reality of impossibility--much like the miracle of the Resurrection.

But just like the miracle of Easter, this undoing of the natural order is a transfiguration: of the violin's acoustic properties. The violin is given a halo of overtones, as it is tuned in two sets of octaves and parallel fourths, all pure intervals. Additionally, Biber writes Sonata XI in the key of G, so on key cadences in the variations (on the tune *Surrexit Christus Hodie*), the performer is actually sounding a quadruple unison on the instrument: the bottom two strings sounding g-g' on open strings, and the top two string stopped on g'-g". What's more, because the violinist can't actually see that these intervals are coming, due to the visual confusion caused by scordatura notation, these moments arrive "by accident"—and with them, the joy of discovery.

Eric Chafe writes about the "ease" of this particular scordatura for executing parallel octaves and tenths, but it's not only about technical ease (certainly the mind-numbing visual-aural disconnects of the opening sonata movement would make any violinist suggest a counter-argument to Chafe's point). Instead, Biber has engineered the sonata to sustain a halo of natural resonance that is surrounding and sounding within the violin. On a pure acoustics level, the sheer prevalence of overtone-rich intervals like octaves, fourths and 10ths would be constantly evoking and reinforcing the purest sounds possible in the harmonic realm. In particular, Biber's unusual inclusion of 10ths (an interval possible but inimical to violin playing) through the miracle of scordatura, creates chords much warmer and richer than those built with 3rds would have been, because of the sounding reinforcement of the 4<sup>th</sup> partial in the overtone series. The sonic qualities of the scordatura and Biber's harmonic language in Sonata XI align the transfigured violin with pure harmony.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> This dances around the fact that acoustics and tuning was of deep scientific and spiritual importance to Early Modern educated elite. Biber's overt use of pure intervals referenced in works by Mersenne and Kircher hints at some other meanings and connections, but those will have to be developed at another time.

From embodied symbolism in the three crosses, to the performed metaphor of the world of the violinist turned upside down, to the transformative power of acoustics and enhanced violin technique, Biber uses the Resurrection sonata to create a meditation on the miracle of Easter which utilizes sight, sound, touch, body and mind, creating a sacred miracle in the most unexpected of places.

Sometimes Biber uses the unique scordatura tunings in ways that work counter-intuitively to the way a violin is supposed to sound, reducing or confusing its overtones. This is apparent in the opening movement of Sonata XIII, “The Descent of the Holy Spirit,” where ambiguous harmonies are intensified by the tuning of the top two strings in a minor third: c#-e. This means that there are numerous passages in which the violinist fingers a fifth, a single finger stopping two strings at the same point, in order to sound a third. As a result, the sonata jangles with mistuned intervals.

Why would Biber have composed this uncomfortable effect as a meditation upon the descent of the Holy Spirit? A look at the corresponding Biblical passages in John chapters 14 and 16 and Acts chapter 2 reveals that Pentecost was not, at least at first, a purely joyful event; the appearance is marked by mystery and uncertainty. Jesus had described the Holy Ghost as a “comforter,” and yet cryptically kept mentioning that it cannot be comprehended by mankind. “Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”<sup>152</sup> The passage in Acts describing the event is filled with descriptions of “sounds from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind” that fills the house and “cloven tongues of fire” that come to rest on the disciples and cause them to speak in a mysterious new language to the onlookers.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord and in one

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<sup>152</sup> John 14: 17 (KJV)

place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.<sup>153</sup>

Biber was able to conjure a tuning system in Sonata XI: The Resurrection which managed to synthesize every part of the violinist's body into a symbol of the resurrection of Christ, a state of being the performer didn't know he could inhabit. Here he seeks to confuse and disorient, pitting the performer's expectation of sonority against the tuning system of the instrument. The sonata itself is set in D minor, normally a sonorous and resonant key for the violin. However, Biber tunes the violin in the dominant, to an A-major chord: a-e'-c#''-e". All the resonance of the instrument is located on the unstable, yearning V harmony, while the stability of the home key is muted and reduced. He displaces the violinist into an uncomfortable space between, unable to quite comprehend where he is or where he is going, or quite what he is saying. Such must have been the disorientation for those in the Bible passage seeing tongues of fire suddenly appear in the sky and hearing their colleagues and themselves uttering strange, incomprehensible languages which not even the speaker could understand.

To confound things further, the page looks like it's anchored around flats, with the stability of the soft hexachord: but in the execution, bright sharps and major thirds just keep popping up. So, the violinist spends the entire sonata caught between major and minor, disoriented as to where in his fingers' "home" actually rests.

I will pause here to revisit an aspect of *meraviglia* which was less common in Baroque art, but was nevertheless continuously at the wings peering in: the "awe" in "awful." *Meraviglia* isn't only

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<sup>153</sup> Acts 2:1-21 (KJV) Verses 1-4

about basking in the glory of beauty, but about our visceral reaction of the monstrous. Kircher's concept of the *stylus phantasticus* is rooted in the instrumentalist's ability to create marvel, and this can just as easily be caused by something nasty as it can be by something glorious. St. Ignatius wanted his followers of the Spiritual Exercises to meditate on the sulfuric fumes of hell and the sensation of flames licking one's feet just as strongly as imagining the trumpets and opalescent clouds of Paradise. Through catching the violinist between expectation and reality, and keeping him in a constant state of harmonic confusion, Biber creates a sonata, that enacts through the body of the violinist an affect of incomprehension, an instability which transmits to the mood of the piece and then out to the listeners.

Ann Schnoebelen and Steven Bonta have pointed out that from early on in the seventeenth century the violin was played in Mass during the Elevation of the Host, and by the 1670's, it was specifically *violin* sonatas that were typical during Mass.<sup>154</sup> In many ways, it seems that the violin becomes a kind of symbol, like the Host itself, with symbolic activities (like Elevation) enacted on it in representational ways. This is exemplified in sonatas nos. VII, VIII and IX, the "sorrowful mysteries," which deal with the scourging, crowning of thorns, and beating of Jesus, and with his carrying of the cross. In these sonatas, the standard, fifth-based G-D-A-E tuning has been transformed by the removal of the violin's low range—the lowest G string is, quite literally, yanked up to either C or D, while the E string is tuned down a tone (in VIII) or two (in VII), confining the violin's natural tessitura in a reduced sonic space. G-strings don't readily go above a Bb at the highest, and if the violinist does not install a thinner D string in the G's place, we hear the sound of a string which is stretched to its breaking point. It is something that not only sounds very tense and tortured in timbre, but feels extremely fraught to the violinist, almost to the point of creating a kind of performer's guilt. Every bow stroke brings the risk of overpowering the string and breaking it.

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<sup>154</sup>Ann Schnoebelen, "The Role of the Violin in the Resurgence of the Mass," *Early Music*, XVIII:4 (1990): 537-544.

Indeed, the extreme tension on the G in contrast to the more slack tension on the E string inevitably causes warping of the violin's bridge over the course of practicing and performing the sonatas—damage which results in having to remove the bridge to steam it back to straightness, and eventually replacing it entirely. The performer causes physical harm and torture to the instrument, much like the suffering brought on Jesus by mankind's sin.

Herein lies a discrepancy between how we have traditionally conceived of to whom and to what end a performance of a piece of music is presented. In a traditionally conceived pictorial/mimetic musical experience, such as the *Battaglia*, or the *Sonata Representativa*, the virtuoso inspires *meraviglia* in his audience to the degree that they are able to follow the conceit of what he's doing. For example, in Biber's previously discussed *Battaglia*, the audience *has* to understand that Biber makes six people play three different melodies at the same time because they are mimicking the sounds of drunk people. If the audience does not understand that this is "the point," they might assume that the massive amounts of dissonance were actually symptomatic of the composer himself being inebriated.

However, in performing the Rosary Sonatas, this same kind of mutual understanding isn't being enacted. For virtually none of the minutiae of the player's kinetic experience transfer over to the audience. To the violinist, each of these tuning systems is felt very deeply, through the response of the strings to the bow in the right hand, all the way up through the minute resonance changes felt by the violinist as the sound waves travel directly through the facial bones to the ears by way of the chin resting on the instrument. Violinists identify with the sound and resonance of their instruments almost as intimately as the sound of their own voices. With scordatura, the violinist *feels* the effective changes taking place. Such intimate knowledge is not possible for a mere listener, and it cannot be observed at all.

Yet if the audience can't "get it," why construct this kind of an elaborate stratagem in the first place? The first possibility is that Archbishop, as a connoisseur of string music, would have recognized how special it was when his virtuoso brought in multiple violins and ceremonially strummed a mistuned fiddle, then filling his patron with delight upon hearing something marvelous come from something so seemingly bizarre. These sonatas, with their carefully constructed mistunings and uses of different kinds of intervals, would have provided a myriad of topics for the 'discourse about' of an elite group of nobility. By steering the music away from the pictorial to the structural and affectual level, Biber would have been acknowledging the intellectual positions of his audience members and encouraging ennobled discourse.

Biber also provided a second level of intimate, private corporeal experience that was just for the performer. It was a level of experience that only he or another "faithful" violinist would feel, and then only by taking the trouble to play these sonatas. Even as the Archbishop and other elite listeners were trapped below the glass ceiling of discourse, Biber created a level of religious and spiritual experience that his listeners were unable, for all their education and ennoblement, to access, enacting the most secret of *musica reservata*.

This transformation of the everyday into the religiously experiential is exactly the kind of work that is at the heart of St. Ignatius's devotional aims of increasing inner awareness of the divine. He uses the simple example of eating to demonstrate how through altering diet and disciplining one's hunger, a practitioner can regulate human desire and meditate on the feast of the Lord's supper.<sup>155</sup> An analogous process is happening here through scordatura for the performing violinist. The violinist intentionally creates an alteration, an estrangement from her instrument, creating distance and difference in the very senses she has spent decades developing. Instead, she must trust

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<sup>155</sup> Ignatius of Loyola, "Rules to Put Oneself For the Future, As to Eating," *Spiritual Exercises*. trans. Father Elder Mullen, 57-58.

her visual senses, trust the text, and her rote kinetic practice, trusting that the correct pitches will emerge despite the evidence of her eyes. This requires that she focus solely, in a hyperaware fashion, on the sonic and kinetic experience of playing the violin. In essence, then, the performer is meditating on the mystery.

## SCORDATURA AND RITUAL SPACE

The Latin *meditatio* is defined as a “reflection, contemplation (of an action), a rhetorical exercise,” and, most specifically, “a practice.”<sup>156</sup> One literally has to prepare oneself and one’s instrument for the act of playing one of these pieces. One has to create the sonic space in which one is going to practice a particular sonata—one cannot just sit down and sight-read them. This preparation is analogous to what Richard Schechner calls “ritual space” or what Mircea Eliade calls “the creation of Sacred Space.”<sup>157</sup>

St. Ignatius himself speaks strongly of this creation of a time and space for performing Spiritual Exercise: “In these he will, ordinarily, more benefit himself, the more he separates himself from all friends and acquaintances and from all earthly care, as by changing from the house where he was dwelling, and taking another house or room to live in, in as much privacy as he can... The second is, thus being isolated, and not having his understanding divided on many things, but concentrating his care on one only, namely, on serving his Creator and benefiting his own soul, he uses with greater freedom his natural powers, in seeking with diligence what he so much desires.”<sup>158</sup>

When performing ritual, there is some sort of symbolic gesture that prepares both the body and mind for worship and devotion. This may be the covering of heads when entering a church, the removal of shoes, or anointing of the head with water. It is only when the body and mind have been

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<sup>156</sup> See the definition and etymology of “meditate” in the *Oxford English Dictionary* <<http://www.oed.com>> (accessed 7 January 2010).

<sup>157</sup> Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, trans. Willard Trask (New York: Harcourt, 1959), 20.

<sup>158</sup> Ignatius of Loyola. *The Spiritual Exercises*, trans. Father Elder Mullen, Introduction: Annotation XX,16.

properly prepared for the meditative and ritual acts that the transformational practices of worship and devotion can occur. Schechner writes, “When the sacred space is a natural place—a sacred tree, cave or mountain, for example—one approaches the space with care. But ordinary secular spaces can be made temporarily special by means of ritual action.”<sup>159</sup>

For a rosary practitioner, ritual space is created both physically and mentally. The opening six texts, which correspond to the crucifix-pendant portion of the rosary beads, fulfill this function. If spoken at a medium speed, it takes at least two minutes to work through the introductory texts. In that time, the practitioner’s mind is quieted and body is prepared to settle into the calm and repetitive motion of the rosary meditation. Through the introductory texts, the body becomes accustomed and prepared for the ritual action that will take place.

For the violinist, ritual space is also created in approaching the *Rosary Sonatas*. In essence, the body of the violinist and the violin itself must transition and adjust to the ritual space created by the scordatura: one must prepare one’s instrument and own inner sense of pitch in order to meditate on a particular Mystery. Because of the unique difficulties of the scordatura, the performer often can only focus on and practice one particular sonata until the task is done for the day. It is extremely impractical and frustrating to switch between tunings on one violin, both because of the time it takes to tune the instrument and also because of the nature of the strings themselves; any strings, but gut strings in particular, take time to settle into a particular tension or pitch. The violinist has to transition the instrument into its new tuning system, constantly adjusting the strings until they have settled. Biber, as a professional violinist, would have known this intimately.

Each sonata contains unique challenges, which can only be worked out through careful practice. The result is one of self- discovery through which the performer learns to adjust instrument

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<sup>159</sup> Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. (Reprint, New York: Routledge, 2006), 72.

and body in order to meditate on the Mysteries.

This ties in, once again, with the act of Rosary prayer. Ann Winston-Allan, in her book on the Rosary in the Middle Ages, writes that, "In dealing with the Rosary it is even more necessary to stress that the meaning is not in the text, but in the context, that is, in the performance of the ritual."<sup>160</sup> When performing the ritual of rosary prayer, the goal is to know the texts so well that the spoken words and the individual's mental concentration disconnect – that is, to get to the point where the prayers and the movements can be done essentially on autopilot, leaving the mind free to further meditate on the actual Mystery itself. In essence, the body becomes so immersed in the routine that the mind is freed from worldly constraints to further explore and contemplate the Divine.

The unique challenges of altered tunings require that the violinist start over with each “decade” (as it were) and intensely “practice-into” the ability to be comfortable with each sonata. By looking at the violin part, which indicates finger placement but not sounding pitch, the violinist has to alter the violin, create the ritual space, and place herself in that sonic and mental space to meditate on the mystery; taking a leap of faith to discover what sonic experience she will encounter.

However, once the violinist has fully devoted herself to the practice of the mystery, after a while she becomes comfortable within the sonic space: the difficulty of each sonata disappears for those 5-10 minutes. In essence, the violinist is able to achieve her own ecstatic experience through the ritualistic repetitive act of practicing in scordatura, as well as through the musical repetition and intensification prescribed by the sonatas themselves.

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<sup>160</sup> Anne Winston-Allan, *Stories of the Rose: The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages*. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 1997) 29.

In the seventeenth century, mystical and spiritual writers used the word “ecstatic” in order to describe the feeling of displacement, of the state of rapture in which the body and soul separate, with the soul temporarily leaving the confines of the flesh in order to more deeply contemplate the divine.<sup>161</sup> Through Biber’s Rosary Sonatas, he stages just this kind of displacement, removing the violinist from the realm of worldly, pictorial, mimetic spectacle, and engaging body, mind and instrument in a transformative, spiritual, processual metaphor of meditation. Even while working within the discourse of the religious court system, he synthesizes repetitive musical structures and complex scordatura techniques, transforming the practice of *phronesis* (doing) into devotional creation.

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<sup>161</sup> See definition 3a. under “ecstasy” at *Oxford English Dictionary* <<http://www.oed.com>>. (accessed 20 April 2013).

*Per la Camera*, Los Angeles, 2011

There are times in the experience of professional musicians when the commonalities between history and the present converge. Here we were, providing background music at Libby's brother's Engagement Party, at the Schmitz home in a gated community in Encino, California. "Home" was a weak word for where the Schmitz family lived. Across the street lived actor Chris Tucker, and down the street, the Jacksons (Well, all of them except Michael and Janet). If Queen Christina of Sweden had lived in Los Angeles in 2011, her place probably would have been right next door.

Jonathan and I were on our dinner break. Not 30 seconds after a server had brought us a plate of dessert, Cindi, the event planner, came over to our small table sequestered away from the 'real' guests. "Are you done yet? It's really time you start up again." I watched Jonathan stiffen and try not to drop his fork. Without waiting for an answer, Cindi sharply turned and walked away.

"Are you kidding me?" Jonathan hissed. "What's her problem? We're guests here too. Didn't she just see us have a drink with the father of the groom?"

"She doesn't know that. She just thinks we're the hired help, like her and the bartender." I took one last bite of mango sorbet, and we walked back to where our music stands were set up—on the top level of an enormous tiered patio complete with renaissance-style stone railings. Two hours of jazz standards down; 90 minutes of 'classical' to go.

"Shall we?" I said, opening the book to Sonata VII of Corelli's Op. 5, first of the sonatas labeled "per la camera."

"Sure thing, and thank god for repeats!" said Jonathan, sitting down and anchoring his cello's endpin in the rock stop.

The opening Preludio was marked “vivace.” I opened with a climbing, hopping melody in broken thirds that was only disrupted by a single syncopation. The cello answered in canon, following behind my melody. After the opening phrase landed on a half cadence, it seemed like a good time for a sequence, and sure enough, Corelli took the same broken-third gesture and began climbing down by step, with the cello dutifully echoing every phraselet. No surprises here.

As the movement proceeded, Corelli gradually upped the ante with shifts into higher positions for each instrument, which each of us in turn managed to fluff. Still no response from the guests as they continued milling about and laughing; making their way to and from the extensive dessert buffet. It seemed we were entertaining ourselves.

The second movement, Corrente, featured the same kind of climbing eighth-note figures in d minor. This time, Jonathan didn’t have canon figures; the egalitarian nature of the opening movement was gone, and it was the violin’s show now. Three measures in, I was off and running on a sequence, adorned with a few triplets and piano/forte markings. Just as before, we cadenced on A, and then went right back to the beginning. I was already beginning to feel the need to add ornaments, trills, go completely off-book—anything really—to make this more interesting for me. Corelli is the ultimate warm blanket of predictability and convention, but with four more sonatas ahead of me, I was already thinking a little unpredictability might be welcome now and then.

By the time we hit Sonata IX, it seemed that Corelli was practically begging us to “fill in the blanks.” In the Tempo di Gavotta the cello has a running eighth-note bass line, while the violin is stuck with a banal descending broken-sixth A major scale. After this is played twice, the scale then reverses and goes back up the scale halfway twice, before just cadencing back on A. Corelli doesn’t even bother to direct us toward the dominant. And then it repeats. No hints of the technical challenges in other sonatas. Just ridiculously simple, easy quarter notes and by-the-book cadences.

What was I supposed to do with this? Corelli appeared to have had an off day, or perhaps was relying on a compositional practice not unlike Miles Davis' "So What:" writing the most basic of "melodies" and inviting the performer to see how complicated she could make things.

I took that as my invitation to see how far I could push the envelope before I completely messed it up. I told Jonathan to keep going no matter what and we started off. The first time through I played the etude-like quarter note as is, but the second time, I was doing triplets, scalar flourishes, trills, you name it. I was determined to turn it into a piece of ridiculousness in the opposite direction. I played a few funny notes, but then I'd stick in another trill and some vibrato and it was like it never happened. As we finally ended the repeat of the B section, both Jonathan and I had to laugh. Even if we were the hired help, at least we were going to have some fun.

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## Chapter 4

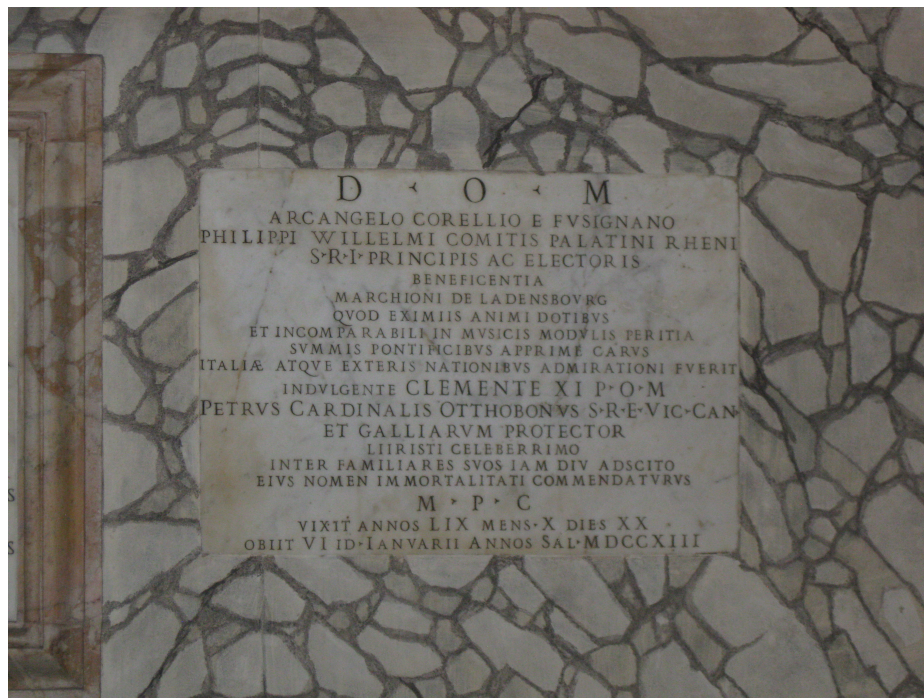
### *Orpheus' Innovation:*

#### Arcangelo Corelli, Codification, and the Virtuosity of Simplicity

Through this dissertation we have seen violinists use their virtuosity to elevate their social status. Biagio Marini hustled his way back and forth across the Alps, using publishing as self-promotion, earning knighthood in Neuberg and marrying well in Milan. Heinrich Biber outperformed even his more cosmopolitan competitor George Muffat in Salzburg, fiddling himself all the way to ennoblement by the Emperor. Giuseppe Colombi used a combination of virtuosity and brilliant pedagogy to earn his way into a stable, lifelong court position in his hometown of Modena.

These violinists in many ways were some of the exceptions, proving what was possible through singular and rare displays of *ingegno* to those lucky enough to hear them perform. But in the

zig-zagging, meandering trajectory of the violin virtuoso's social ascendance, we can view Corelli as a definite arrival point. He worked in some of the most wealthy, glamorous courts in one of the musical centers of Europe, earning and maintaining an international publishing career, dying wealthy and adored, and even entombed in the Roman Pantheon-- just a few feet away from the painter Raphael-- where concerts of his music marked the anniversary of his death for years after. Quite a social climb from the anonymous death and unknown grave of Giovanni Battista Fontana in 1630.



However, even as we can look back and see that Corelli marked a pinnacle of social advancement for violin virtuosos, his posthumous reputation was maligned from the late eighteenth century onward. This was partially due to the very publications that garnered him international fame and renown during his own lifetime. Through comparing Corelli's period performance record with his published works, I will examine how he manipulated the same patronage-performer structures as his predecessors, but began to change the meaning of what it meant to publish through his

compositional choices-- rewriting the rules of how virtuosity would be displayed, as the seventeenth turned to the eighteenth century.

*Corelli as Violinist (Biography and Contemporary Opinions)*

Arcangelo Corelli was born on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1653 in Fusignano, located between Ravenna and Bologna. Unlike the other violinists discussed in this dissertation, Corelli was born relatively wealthy. He came from a prosperous landed family with an old history in the Emilia Region. In most circumstances we wouldn't expect someone coming from this station to go into instrumental music at all. However, being that Arcangelo was not only the youngest of five children but that his father died a month before he was born, he must have been very aware that-- with three older brothers in line ahead of him-- none of the family estate would be left to him.<sup>162</sup> Despite his going into a professional trade, Corelli's family background could have gained him a different kind of interpersonal relationship with his patrons later on.

While evidence of his early training is a bit murky, we know that he started his career in Bologna, which had a vibrant musical life centered on the Basilica of San Petronio and the Accademia Filarmonica. His time there proved to have been quite formative, or perhaps the cachet of having been trained in Bologna was useful, because Corelli referred to himself as "Il Bolognese" for the rest of his life. There he studied with Ercole Gaibara and Leonardo Brugnoli. Gaibara was a member of the Concerto Palatino,<sup>163</sup> a group known for the virtuoso violinists in its roster, and Gaibara and Brugnoli were among the salaried musicians at the church of San Petronio. Brugnoli in

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<sup>162</sup> Marc Pincherle. *Corelli, His Life, His Work*. trans Hubert E.M. Russell. (New York: Da Capo, 1979), 19.

<sup>163</sup> As a side note, I will point out that this was the same Concerto Palatino whose cornettists had been banned from performing in public because they were evidently so bad by this point (see Introductory Chapter). The fact that the group was known for its violin virtuosi and terrible cornetto playing in the same group is indicative of the change in position of these two former instrumental competitors.

particular was known for his ability to embellish and improvise.<sup>164</sup> While in Bologna, Corelli was exposed to a few important trends in the Bolognese musical life. First, he joined the Accademia Filarmonica, one of the main local forums for debuting new music, at the age of 17.<sup>165</sup> Additionally, Corelli became aware of the benefits and limits of music publication. Bologna had been experiencing an instrumental music publishing boom in the 1660's and 1670's with the help of the Giacomo Monti Press, and instrumentalists from all over the Emilia Romagna region were sending music there. However, the printing capabilities were so antiquated that they weren't able to accurately represent solo work, and therefore aimed many sonatas at an amateur market. Corelli would consequently have been aware of the limitations of Italian printing, as well as the potential discrepancy between published and performed music. It was this very discrepancy that came to severely affect critical reception of Corelli's work long after his death.<sup>166</sup>

While Corelli would remain known as "Il Bolognese" for the rest of his career, from 1675 he appears on pay records in Rome. He lived and worked there for the rest of his life, holding positions in some of the most elite courts in Rome and garnering accolades as performer and composer. Along with some of the most well-known musicians in Rome, such as lutenist Lelio Colista and violinist Carlo Manelli, Corelli was a ripienist for a number of high-profile oratorio productions such as Antonio Masini's oratorio *S. Eustachio* (premiered February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1675) and Alessandro Stradella's *San Giovanni Battista* (commissioned by Queen Christina of Sweden and premiered March 31<sup>st</sup> of the same year).<sup>167</sup> By the end of 1679, Queen Christina had hired both Corelli and Matteo Fornari, his lifelong partner and second violinist, as salaried employees at her Roman court. After abdicating the

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<sup>164</sup> Peter Allsop, *Arcangelo Corelli: New Orpheus of Our Times* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 20.

<sup>165</sup> Michael Talbot, "Arcangelo Corelli." *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy, www.grovemusic.com, (accessed 10 April 2013).

<sup>166</sup> I will point out that Corelli was far from the only one to suffer this fate; Colombi's reception would be another prime example. However, Corelli was certainly the most famous and influential violinist to later have his performance history re-written.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 27

Swedish throne to become a Catholic, she had set up court in Rome and become a major patroness of the arts, filling the gap that yawned in musical patronage after the Barberini had left Rome<sup>168</sup>. She held weekly academies, concerts and other musical productions at her Palazzo, even funding some of the first public operas in Rome.<sup>169</sup> It was to her that Corelli dedicated his Op. 1 collection of trio sonatas (1681), which was an instant “bestseller” with reprints in Bologna, Venice, London, Amsterdam, Modena and Antwerp over the following twenty years.

In 1683, when Christina fell on financial hard times, Corelli and Fornari entered the service of Cardinal Benedetto Pamphilij, one of the richest artistic patrons of the time. And when Pamphilij was promoted to papal legate in Bologna, both Corelli and Fornari were accepted into the service of Pope Innocent XI’s grandnephew, Pietro Ottoboni, who held one of the highest offices in the church at the age of 22. Ottoboni superseded even Pamphilij in his esteem for the arts, and music in particular. His Palazzo della Cancelleria became known all over Europe, and international dignitaries and aristocrats would frequent the concerts and academies held at his house.

At each of these positions, pay records indicate that Corelli’s employers and colleagues held him in the highest esteem. When Corelli was in the employ of Queen Christina, the Duke of Modena Francesco II D’Este (himself a violinist whom we have met in Chapter 2 as pupil of Giuseppe Colombi) tried to recruit Corelli to move to Modena and join his court. However, it appears that he couldn’t give Corelli an offer to top what he was getting in Rome, as Francesco’s agent, Ercole Panziroli, wrote his employer “Arcangelo *detto il Bolognese* is the first man on this instrument in Rome today. There is much doubt that he would leave Rome because he is so highly esteemed, cherished, and paid here, one might say at a very high price, as I have gathered from many

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<sup>168</sup> For whom Giovanni Maria Roscioli, the dedicatee of Fontana’s *Libro* (1641) worked.

<sup>169</sup> Silke Leopold. “Rome: Sacred and Secular,” *Music and Society: The Early Baroque Era*. ed. Curtis Price. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), 66.

people.”<sup>170</sup> The agent went on to say that perhaps the Duke would have better luck trying to hire someone else that wasn’t as prestigious. Corelli did, as a show of good favor (and perhaps to keep his options open), dedicate his Op. 3 collection to the Duke.

Corelli was evidently paid particularly well at Cardinal Ottoboni’s court, many times receiving between 3 and 12 *scudi* for a single performance, while his partner Fornari was usually paid half to one-tenth Corelli’s amount. (For a frame of reference, a family of 5 could have lived comfortably on 90 scudi a year, while the painter Paul Rubens, who employed two servants, complained to his employer in Rome how 140 just wasn’t enough to live off).<sup>171</sup> From Corelli’s will, we learn that Corelli was rich enough to have employed two servants (a luxury enjoyed by less than a third of Romans<sup>172</sup>), and to have amassed a collection of violins and 142 paintings (an investment strategy common among Roman artists). It appears that Corelli had acquired a sizable material wealth for an instrumental musician.

Period anecdotes corroborate that Corelli was extremely well respected as a performer. Giovanni Mario Crescembeni, Poet and founder of the Academia Arcadia (of which Corelli was a member late in life), referred to the special treatment and place Corelli held in Ottoboni’s court, calling him ‘famoso professore di violino.’<sup>173</sup> He is referred to time and time again as “the best in Europe” the “Most celebrated in Rome,” etc. The Roman castrato and writer Andrea Adami (another highly paid musician employed by Ottoboni) called Corelli “the greatest glory of this century, of whom the fame of his five Opere given to the press attests now and always that they are the marvel of the entire world...”<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Peter Allsop, *Arcangelo Corelli*, 41.

<sup>171</sup> Richard E Spear “Scrambling for Scudi: Notes on Painter’s Earnings in Early Baroque Rome” *The Art Bulletin* 85, No. 2 (Jun., 2003): 315.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid*, 314.

<sup>173</sup> Allsop, 48.

<sup>174</sup> Mario Rinaldi, *Arcangelo Corelli* (Milan: Edizioni Curci, 1953), 427 in Peter Allsop, *Arcangelo Corelli*, 29.

An anonymous Englishman added on his own description of Corelli's playing to his 1709 translation of Francois Raguenet's travels in Italy. He described colorfully the wild display of affect that Corelli made while performing. "I never met with any man that suffer'd his passions to hurry him away so much whilst he was playing on the violin as the famous Arcangelo Corelli, who's [sic] eyes will sometimes turn as red as Fire; his countenance will be distorted, his eyeballs roll as in agony, and he gives in so much to what he is doing that he doth not look like the same man."<sup>175</sup>

Another anecdote comes from Corelli's tenure at the Ottoboni court, where James Drummond, the Earl of Perth, visited in 1695 and described a Corelli performance. "He [Ottoboni] has one who is known by severall [sic] names of le Bollognese Archangelo [sic] (for his name is Michael or Corelli) a fiddler, but who waits on him as a gentleman here; the best player on the fiddle [sic] that ever was, and the greatest master for composing [sic]..."<sup>176</sup>

George Muffat, Vice-Kapellmeister at Prince-Bishop Maximilian von Khuenberg's court in Salzburg, was sent to Rome in 1682 to pick up the latest trends in musical taste in the Papal courts and came back inspired. He had heard there

with great delight and admiration some extremely beautiful sonatas by Arcangelo Corelli, the Italian Orpheus on the violin, performed with the greatest precision by a large number of musicians.. Having observed the considerable variety in this style, I set about composing some of these concertos... to whom I profess myself indebted for many useful observations touching upon this new type of Harmony...<sup>177</sup>

Not only were Corelli's performances held in high regard, but also his compositions were extremely popular. He was the biggest instrumental publishing sensation since Dario Castello 80

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<sup>175</sup> *A comparison between the French and Italian music and opera's. Translated from the French; with some remarks. To which is added a critical discourse upon opera's in England, and a means proposed for their improvement* [trans. Attrib. JE.E. Galliard, perhaps wrongly as Galliard is not known to have visited Italy] (London, 1709), pp. 20-21. As quoted in Neal Zaslaw, "Ornaments for Corelli's Op. 5" *Early Music* 24, no. 1 (February 1996): 110.

<sup>176</sup> Tilmouth "Music and British Travellers Abroad," 364-5, in Peter Allsop, *Arcangelo Corelli*, 53.

<sup>177</sup> George Muffat, *Auserlesene Instrumental-Music*, (Passau: 1701), in Peter Allsop, *Arcangelo Corelli*, 33.

years earlier. From the publication of his first two *Opere*, Corelli began building an international reputation. Op. 1 was reprinted in Bologna, Venice, Modena, Amsterdam, Antwerp and London, and would continue to be in constant publication throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>178</sup>

When Op. 2, the follow-up collection of trio sonatas, was published in Rome in 1685, Corelli became embroiled in controversy back in Bologna, while simultaneously the collection enjoyed immediate reprinting in Bologna and Venice. Giuseppe Colonna, a Bolognese colleague (and competitor), accused Corelli of sloppy part-writing. However, despite rhetorical fireworks and lots of spilled ink in the so-called “affair of the fifths,” numerous composers came out and supported him, calling him “a true son of Rome” and making Colonna, the original accuser, look foolish. The rallying around Corelli speaks, once again, to his popularity.

A case of bad part-writing was a grave charge indeed for a late seventeenth-century musician, especially one who aspired to hold a title of a composer and not merely *suonatore*. What was really going on in both these instances was a battle over social legitimacy. Training in counterpoint was a signifier of being a “real” composer as opposed to being just a regular musician<sup>179</sup> (the *cantor*, who was merely physically engaged in creating music, vs. the *musicus*, the one who had a deep knowledge and understanding of music’s theoretical and formal construction). Accusations of bad part-writing, which called into question an instrumentalist’s claim of being a *musicus*, were a public attack on a his competency and respectability and carried serious weight. In effect, Colonna was implying in the “affair of the fifths” that Corelli didn’t deserve to be considered a composer as he was not competent in creative work, and therefore was no more than a humble violinist-for-hire. The severity of these accusations would result in Corelli seeking out patron protections in the dedicatory pages to his future publications. The kind of patronage protection he sought was not unlike what

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<sup>178</sup> Allsop, 33.

<sup>179</sup> Christopher Page “Musicus and Cantor,” in *A Companion to Medieval and Renaissance Music*, ed. Tess Knighton and David Fallows (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 73.

Giovanni Reghino asked for from Roscioli for Fontana; but Reghino's request was based on the composer not being alive to stage a letter-writing campaign like Corelli did. This incident also suggests a correlation to Corelli's systematic use of fugues, the pinnacle of contrapuntal art, throughout the 'da chiesa' sonatas of Op. 5; he may have been using them to compose out his legitimacy as a *musicus*, one exposition at a time.

It was in fact Op. 5, first printed in 1700 and Corelli's only published collection of solo violin works, that truly solidified his international fame as a composer throughout Europe—and on which his posthumous reputation as a violinist was based. The Op. 5 collection was one of the most reprinted musical texts of the entire 18<sup>th</sup> century, with more than 50 reprints throughout Europe, and many other manuscript versions containing virtuoso embellishments.<sup>180</sup> It became the gold standard for the next 100 years for how to compose, ornament and perform a violin sonata.

*Too Simple to be True: The Paradox of Op. 5 and Corelli's Historiography*

Despite all of the anecdotal evidence, publishing data, pay records, and being given credit as music history's first great violin pedagogue, Corelli's legacy as a virtuoso has been maligned because of one problem: Op. 5 has not been perceived to measure up, either technically or formally, to what might be expected of such a world-renowned performer. What Corelli published in the sonatas was quite simplistic relative to what other violinists and composers were doing at the same time. This is especially true in Sonatas VII-XI, which are predominantly dance suites.

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<sup>180</sup> Michael Talbot, "Arcangelo Corelli," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy, www.grovemusic.com (accessed 9 April 2013).

The Op. 5 collection is broken into two parts. Sonatas I-VI what was called the “chiesa” variety, marked by alternations of slow and fast movements, and at least one fugal, contrapuntal movement per sonata. Sonatas in the first part are marked by the following technical and musical requirements:

Slow movements feature long cantabile melodic lines, and a more singing or tuneful quality, indulging in melody and long phrases. Fast movements exist in three types: 1) A fugal movement for three voices, two of which are played by the violin, and one by the continuo. These movements alternate between chordal writing for the violin and episodic bursts of virtuosic 16<sup>th</sup>-note running figures. 2) A Moto-Perpetuo (perpetual motion) Movement: short and fast, usually only about a minute long; the violinist plays continuous, nonstop passaggi. 3) A “Gig” movement: not labeled as such, it is usually a dance-like movement in compound meter.

The technical and musical demands require command of long phrases, chordal-contrapuntal writing, varied arpeggiation of chords, shifting up to third position and back, and sustaining moderately rapid passage-work. However, none of these technical considerations are anything new or groundbreaking in and of themselves. Carlo Farina had made such demands on his performer back in 1628.

The second part of Op. 5, which is made up of dance suites, is of a “practical” nature—easily sight-readable for a professional violinist. In these sonatas, there are no chordal or perpetual-motion-style movements. No passages require shifting above third position, and most are written in first. All are in violin-friendly keys. An intermediate-level performer can play the music as written without difficulty. .

At the end of the opus Corelli creates a division variation set, “La Follia,” where all of the techniques from Part I are employed in a long sustained piece.

By way of comparison: Biber's *Mystery Sonatas*, discussed in Chapter 3, were being compiled and performed when Corelli began publishing his early trio sonatas, and composing and performing his own solo sonatas at Queen Christina's palace. Biber's most famous collection during his own lifetime and throughout the eighteenth century-- his eight *Sonatae* from 1681-- feature extended passagework, 3 and 4-note chords, upper position work, and extremely fast scalar runs. It was on the basis of this collection of sonatas (and not on having heard Biber play) that historian Charles Burney formed his estimation of Biber as the "greatest violinist of the seventeenth century."<sup>181</sup>

However, despite Corelli's much greater publishing success, Burney did not hold him in such high esteem as a virtuoso, due to what he assumed must have been Corelli's technical limitations as he inferred them from Op. 5. And it was possibly because of these perceived technical limitations that both Burney and John Hawkins published sensationalized, misleading, and outright false anecdotes about Corelli. These have persisted in creating a distorted sense of Corelli as a sort of impostor: a great violinist who somehow lacked technical skill.<sup>182</sup>

Burney's most famous account is the story of Corelli in Naples: *Il Bolognese* is guest-leading the orchestra there, and is shamed in front of the ensemble when he isn't able to play past third position. To add insult to injury, Corelli then cannot sight-read a new piece put in front of him (too many flats), and starts the yet another piece in the wrong key (c minor instead of c major). And finally, the king of Naples gets so bored with one of Corelli's own compositions that he leaves the room.

Burney tells us that he heard these stories "from a particular and intelligent friend," who reported them as he had heard them from Geminiani "a few years before his death" [in 1762] Burney here transcribes and prints a letter from this friend, his correspondent the Reverend Thomas

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<sup>181</sup> Charles Burney, *A General History of Music*, (London: 1776-89); repr. ed. F. C. Mercer, 2 vols. (New York, 1935), 580.

<sup>182</sup> Nevertheless, the very availability of Corelli's [and Biber's] music to these writers speaks to the degree of posthumous publishing success enjoyed by both violinists.

Twining).<sup>183</sup> This provenance is not trustworthy. While Geminiani had studied with Corelli, he hadn't actually been there in Naples. Unfortunately, this became the strongest of the historiographical myths surrounding Corelli.<sup>184</sup>

It does not make sense against the other period anecdotes surrounding Corelli's violin playing. The oboe player's performances so embarrassing Corelli that he ceases performing and wastes away to

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<sup>183</sup> Enrico Careri. "The Correspondence between Twining and Burney Regarding Corelli and Geminiani." *Music and Letters* 72 no 1 (1991): 39.

<sup>184</sup> "A very particular and intelligent friend, upon whose judgment-, and probity I have a most perfect reliance,- having had a conversation with Geminiani about five or six years before his death, and a friend of his at that time having had- in meditation-the writing a History of Music, he committed to paper, when he got home, the chief particulars of this conversation; supposing they might be of some use to his friend; but as the plan he had in view has been long laid aside. I have been favoured with the anecdotes and particulars that were obtained from Geminiani, which, as they chiefly concern Corelli, and were communicated by one of his most illustrious scholars, who heard and saw what-he relates, I shall insert them here.

"At the time that Corelli enjoyed the highest reputation, his fame having reached the court of Naples, and excited a desire in the King to hear him perform; he was invited, by order of his Majesty, to that capital! Corelli, with some-reluctance, was at length prevailed on to accept the invitation; but lest he should not be well accompanied, he took with him his own second violin and violoncello. At Naples he found Alessandro Scarlatti, and several other masters *(b)*, who entreated him to play some of his concertos before the King; this he for some time declined, on account of his whole band not being with him, and there was no time, he said, for a rehearsal. At length, however, he consented; and in great fear performed the first of his concertos. His astonishment was very great to find that the Neapolitan band executed his concertos almost as accurately at sight as his own band, after repeated rehearsals, when they had almost got them by heart. *Si suona*, (says he to Matteo, his second violin) *a Napoli!*

"After this, being again admitted into his Majesty's presence, and desired to perform one of his sonatas, the King found one of the adagios so long and dry, that being tired, he quitted the room, to the great mortification of Corelli. Afterwards, he was desired to lead in the performance of a masque composed by Scarlatti, which was to be executed before the King; this he undertook, but from Scarlatti's little knowledge of the violin, the part was somewhat awkward and difficult: in one place it went up to F; and when they came to that passage, Corelli failed, and was unable to execute it; but he was astonished beyond measure to hear Petrillo, the Neapolitan leader, and the other violins, perform that which had baffled his skill. A song succeeded this, in C minor, which Corelli led off in C major; *ricominciamot* said Scarlatti, good-naturedly. Still Corelli persisted in the major key, till Scarlatti was obliged to call out to him, and set him right. So mortified was poor Corelli with this disgrace, and the general bad figure he imagined he had made at Naples, that he stole back to Rome in silence.

"It was soon after this, that a hautbois player, whose name Geminiani could not recollect, acquired such applause at Rome, that Corelli, disgusted, would never play again in public. All these mortifications, joined to the success of Valentini, whose concertos and performance, though infinitely inferior to those of

Corelli, were become fashionable, threw him into such a state of melancholy and chagrin, as was thought, said Geminiani, to have hastened his death."

*(b)* This must have happened about the time of his decease. Corelli's concertos came out in the year 1708; as it appears, that Scarlatti to have been composed many years before was settled at Rome from *y-joy* 10 the time they were published.

3 N 2 Corelli

This account of Corelli's journey to Naples is not a mere personal anecdote, as it throws a light upon the comparative state of Music at Naples and at Rome in Corelli's time, and exhibits a curious contrast between the fiery genius of the Neapolitans, and the meek, timid, and gentle character of Corelli, so analogous to the style of his Music." In Charles Burney, *A General History of Music*, (London: 1779), 552-554.

his death is the most hyperbolized aspect of the whole thing; painting Corelli as an over-sensitive musician, an aging diva, incapable of keeping up with the new musical trends sweeping Italy.

In fact, as I will discuss shortly, the complete opposite was true. Rather than being behind the times of the Neapolitan musical fashion, Corelli proved to be at the *avant garde*. So it is quite ironic that Burney's whole sub-project in including this anecdote was to promote the "fiery genius" of Neapolitan musicians; all the while tearing down the very man who had helped revolutionize European musical style through interweaving his own compositions with the newest Neapolitan style sweeping the continent: the *galant*.

This suggests a certain blindness on Burney's part, but also points to an interesting conundrum: three generations after Corelli's death, the historian could not imagine that a virtuoso composer might have been more than the published scores he left behind.

Peter Allsop, in his biography of Corelli, succinctly and directly refutes all of these anecdotes, most strongly the infamous Naples case:

"None of this tallies with the facts. First the king was not in Naples in 1708, and secondly, Corelli could not have been unaware of instrumental standards at the court since he was acquainted with Carlo Ambrogio Lonati, who served there before coming to Rome... To suppose that Corelli, acknowledged as the finest violinist in Europe, could not read a piece in C minor is frankly absurd. Such third-hand calumnies should be treated with the contempt they deserve."<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Allsop, *Arcangelo Corelli*, 56.

Allsop's documentary evidence should put the issue to rest; but unfortunately his research comes after nearly 200 years of patronizing statements regarding Corelli's supposed lack of virtuosity and unimaginative composition.

-Pincherle (1933): "His originality lay in not having any. It is because he halted and remained in the domain conquered before him without seeking new horizons, it is because he exploited on the spot, so to speak, those riches that had been accumulated for over a century..."<sup>186</sup>

-Henry Joachim (1935): "A cursory glance at the score of any one of Corelli's must cause the reader to wonder how it comes about that this violinist comes to be known as a great virtuoso: a Corelli whose technique was limited to the third position, and even within this small range was by no means perfect..."<sup>187</sup>

-Simon McVeigh (1992): "Corelli represents a curious figure in the history of the violin. He was scarcely one of the great virtuosos of his day; he traveled little; his compositions were few and comparatively limited in scope. But his influence was immeasurable."<sup>188</sup>

McVeigh then goes on to describe how all of Corelli's students copied his works, based their own compositions on his, and his huge pedagogical influence on the next great generation of violin virtuosos. There is a huge problem with this: if Corelli supposedly couldn't play past third position, how would he have taught Francesco Geminiani, Giovanni Battista Somis (who in turn influenced the next generation of French virtuosos such as Jean-Marie LeClair and Francois Guillemain), not to mention Francesco Veracini, and Pietro Locatelli-- all of whom accredited their most important pedagogical lineage to Corelli—how to shift into 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> position and beyond? How could a

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<sup>186</sup> Marc Pincherle, *Corelli: His Life, his Works*, trans. H. E. M. Russell (New York: Norton, 1956), 179.

<sup>187</sup> Henry Joachim, "Three Milestones in the History of Violin Playing: I. Corelli" *Musical Times*, 73 No. 1076 (Oct. 1, 1932), 889.

<sup>188</sup> Simon McVeigh "The Violinists of the Baroque and Classical periods." *The Cambridge Companion to the Violin*, ed. Robin Stowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 50.

teacher instruct his students in performing such difficult technical feats if he himself didn't know how to do them in the first place?

The historiographical narrative of Corelli as “Good teacher, bad player” has formed the basis of modern general audience “education points.” The trickle-down effect of Burney and Hawkin’s calumnies can be seen in concert program notes, CD booklets, and even Wikipedia, in all of which the Naples tale is usually the lead anecdote. Additionally, many modern violinists only know Corelli from their formative adolescent years, when they worked their way up to Book 6 of Shinichi Suzuki’s ubiquitous Violin Method. The inclusion in the series of an edited version, by Suzuki himself, of Corelli’s *La Follia* has had the unintentional pedagogical consequence among 12-16 year olds and their teachers, of associating Corelli’s bold and seminal work with intermediate-level violin playing.<sup>189</sup>

Allsop’s chapter on Op. 5 partially answers many of the challenges in interpreting and contextualizing Corelli’s “reputation problem.” Another important historical element to consider is the problem of publishing in Italy at the end of the seventeenth century.

By 1681 (when Corelli began to publish) many of the Bolognese and Venetian presses were still using the letter-block technology discussed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. Letter-block printing required that if anything new were to be published (a chord, new high notes, etc.), a new block had to be carved for each note, so musical experimentation resulted directly in very high printing costs. Under these circumstances, it isn’t surprising that many violinists forewent publishing their virtuosic pieces.

Given the anecdotal evidence of Corelli’s charismatic performing persona and the high esteem in which he was held by his very sophisticated and knowledgeable contemporaries and

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<sup>189</sup> Shinichi Suzuki, *Suzuki Violin School: Volume 6*. Miami, FL: Summy-Burchard, 1978.

patrons, it is very likely that he did as Colombi and other contemporaries did, and kept his most adventurous works in manuscript. Especially because he was so popular, ‘apocryphal’ sonatas sprung up almost immediately following his death; almost all are the manuscript equivalent of the myriad of ‘Stradivari’ violins stashed in European attics. Corelli may well have composed sonatas that demonstrated his real technical ability, but he did not publish them, and so they must remain hypothetical.

Corelli’s apparent lack of interest in publishing personal solo ‘vehicles’ suggests that, like Colombi, Corelli was not publishing to promote himself as a performer. Instead, evidence such as his 1679 reply to the request of Count Fabrizio Laderchi that a new sonata have a more equal parity between the lute and an otherwise dominant violin, suggests that he was asked to edit his soloistic style down to a level that others could recreate.

“My sinfonie are made solely to allow the violin to predominate, and those of other Professors do not appear to me so intended. I am at present composing certain sonatas which are to be performed at the first Academy of Her Highness of Sweden... when I have finished them I shall compose one for Your Illustrious Lordship in which the Lute will have equal status to the violin.”<sup>190</sup>

This excerpt makes it quite clear that Corelli was composing solo sonatas for himself which normally had the violin in a more prominent (and thus possibly virtuosic) role than the basso continuo, and that to write a special “egalitarian” sonata would be a special favor. It also suggests that Corelli withheld his most virtuosic sonatas from publication as “works,” keeping them as real time experiences that only he would write/play for his patrons. Hence they failed to survive to the present day.

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<sup>190</sup> A. Cavicchi, “Corelli e il violinismo bolognese”, *Studi corelliani: Atti del Primo Congresso Internazionale* (Fusignano 508 settembre 1968) (Florence, 1972). The Original Document is located in Fondo Lederchi, Biblioteca Comunale, Faenza. Quote translated by Peter Allsop in Corelli, pg. 30.

As previously discussed, this wasn't uncommon in the Bolognese tradition, and among Corelli's colleagues in Rome, the impetus to publish at all was rare. Colleagues at Ottoboni's court such as Carl Ambrogio Lonati, Lelio Colista, etc never sought publication, and we are left with only fragmentary manuscript evidence of their compositions.<sup>191</sup> Even 60 years after Corelli's op. 5, cello virtuoso Luigi Boccherini did the very same thing, keeping his most technically advanced writing from publication, going so far as to not even include his showy sonatas in his own catalogue of his Opera.

Corelli's first edition of Op. 5 was notable as it was one of the first works for violin to be published in Italy via engraving.<sup>192</sup> A new copperplate press had been started in Rome by Gasparo Pietra Santa and Corelli's op. 5 was one of their first publications. One imagines that Corelli, who had grown up and worked under the assumption that the presses couldn't handle the more experimental aspects of one's compositions, would have been cautious with a new press to make sure that his new edition was doable. With an already established international reputation to uphold and his previous experience of the "Affair of the Fifths" in regards to his Op. 2, Corelli had practical reasons to publish a more conservative manuscript.

Another aspect to consider, as Allsop points out, is that Corelli's Op. 5 falls within the tradition of the unaccompanied sonata *a due*. The title, *Suonate a violino e violone o cembalo* ("Sonata for violin and violone OR keyboard") specifies that the intended partner can be another string instrument; often the basso part is nearly as interesting as the violin part.<sup>193</sup> Corelli does not use the generic term basso continuo, implying that the part is not just operating in a supporting role. This is

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<sup>191</sup> Particularly in the case of Lonati, also a virtuoso violinist, this is a shame, because we know he and Corelli were working together at the court of Queen Christina. Lonati's surviving manuscripts, such as the Sonata collection he sent to the Elector of Dresden in 1690 (See the Intermedio) suggests a similar technical level to that of Colombi in Modena, with extensive upper string work and even chordal writing. Piotr Wilk, "Chordal Playing in the 17th-Century Violin Repertoire." *Musica Iagellonica*, (2004):170

<sup>192</sup> Peter Allsop, "Violinist Virtuosity in the Seventeenth Century: Italian Supremacy or Austro-German Hegemony?," *Il saggitore musicale*, 3/2 (1996): 233-58.

<sup>193</sup> David Watkin, "Corelli's Op. 5 Sonatas: 'Violino e violone e cimbalo?'" *Early Music*, 24: 4 (Nov. 1996): 645.

particularly true in Sonatas VII-XI. A clear example is the “Tempo di Gavotta” from Sonata IX, where the bass actually has the better line, with the violin playing very simple, almost etude-like string crossing scale passages (see Example 5.0 below): an invitation to violinists to “fill in the blanks” in this bare boned structure. It was this invitation that I felt obliged to take up when playing on the balcony at the Schmitz’ party. David Watkin argues that my cellist would have done so as well.<sup>194</sup>

Geminiani sought to improve upon his teacher’s original, and composed a variation set based on this movement, which his student Michael Dubourg, would, in turn, transform into his own set.<sup>195</sup> Francesco Maria Veracini saw it fit to rectify the supposed inequality between the voices and “transcribed” this movement, switching the violin and bass parts.<sup>196</sup>

**Example 4.0: Sonata IX in A Major, “Tempo di Gavotta- Allegro,” measures 1-4**

So, if we assume that a) Corelli was in fact a marvelous violinist, equal or superior to those of his contemporaries b) that his decision to publish the Op. 5 sonatas as technically simple, conventional works was intentional and c) that limitations in publishing technologies affected his

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Neal Zaslaw, “Ornaments for Corelli’s Sonatas, Op. 5,” *Early Music* (February 1996): 97.

<sup>196</sup> In fact Veracini took the ornamentation urge one step further: recomposing his own version of Op. 5 in his *Dissertazioni sopra l’Opera Quinta del Corelli* (1745), complete with more counterpoint, expansions, and “transcriptions” like the aforementioned “Tempo di Gavotta” of Sonata IX.

compositional choices, how can we go about rescuing his reputation as one of the great virtuosi of violin history?

*Simplicity, Virtuosity, Sonatas and Status: What you write when you don't have to prove anything.*

Perhaps a problem accrues around shifting understandings of virtuosity and virtù. Let us recall the seventeenth-century concept of virtue as distinctive, particular and an expression of masculine excellence. Corelli, as a performer, had worked himself into the upper echelons of the most elite courts in Rome, presenting himself and his music as a topic for the 'discourse about' of his noble patrons in select venues like Queen Christina's Academies. As a violinist who had achieved the most success that someone could possibly accomplish, Corelli didn't actually have to publish anything, for he had already gained the pinnacle of fame. As I've mentioned previously, his musical colleagues at Queen Christina's and Cardinal Ottoboni's courts never even felt enough of a need to establish a posthumous record.<sup>197</sup> Their employers paid for their "work" which was expressed in real time performances and experiences; inspiring *meraviglia* by presenting of ephemeral musical delights.

However, as I've already discussed in this dissertation, the display of physical spectacle in order to prove a violinist's *ingegno* and *virtuosità* only earned a violinist a place inside the room; it is not to be confused with being on an equal class status with his patrons. He is not a possessor of *virtù*. Corelli, having come from a wealthy landed family, but yet working as a member of the professional class, would have been intimately aware of this divide. *Virtù* came from a display of intellect, of creativity and singularity that was not manifested by working with one's hands.

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<sup>197</sup> Which, unfortunately, has left musicologists scrambling for scraps of manuscripts left behind to fill in the blanks. See Eleanor McCrickard. "The Roman Repertory for Violin before the Time of Corelli." *Early Music*, 18: 4 (Nov., 1990): 563-573

To bridge this divide, Corelli uses the medium of his published record in Op. 5, which spoke not only to fellow virtuosi, but also to the very upper class that he was only a periphery member of. He does this by creating sonatas that display a profound understanding of the idiom of the violin and the stylistic attributes of the two useful kinds of sonatas, fusing these styles with the latest Neapolitan compositional trends. In Op. 5, his understanding of violin pedagogy speaks to the performers by presenting a pure distilled violinistic idiom, without the frills, trills, or extravagance for which the instrument had begun to be known (and occasionally derided). It is here he displays in print the secrets of *sprezzatura*, the art of making it look easy and effortless, building in the essence of *diletto* for audiences but equipped with in-the-know tricks of the virtuoso's trade for the performers. However, Corelli also demonstrates a mastery of genre and compositional process imbued with the intellectual stimulation of the modern *stile galant*, which speaks directly to the rising market of ennobled amateurs, who could read Op. 5 either in the voyeuristic sense of patrons past or through attempting the sonatas themselves. In doing so, Corelli displays not the *virtuosità* of a *cantus*, but the intellect and *virtù* of a *musicus*.

*Idiom, Pure Idiom:*

One of the aspects of these sonatas which is most striking from a performer's perspective is how absolutely simply they lie in the hands of the violinist, in terms of fingering, shifting, and bowing. Neal Zaslaw points out how the sonatas seem to be defined as the maximum effect with the minimum effort.<sup>198</sup> In many ways, it is absolutely true. Part of the subtlety of these sonatas is how in the hands of a trained violinist, they have all the "guesswork" written out of them. Shifts are easily executed in places that support phrase emphasis, such as on strong beats and after half-steps, string

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<sup>198</sup> Neal Zaslaw, "Ornaments for Corelli's Sonatas, Op. 5," 111.

crossings move to upper strings on weak beats and up bows. Figurations fit neatly within the hand, and accents fit beautifully with Baroque bowing patterns. Long lines make gorgeous use of the baroque violin's ability to "bloom" on the notes and create complete expressive events out of simple notes, which was an attribute of solo writing in the seventeenth century.<sup>199</sup> This effect, the violin equivalent of the singer's *Messa di voce*, was later described by Corelli's student Geminiani in his 1751 treatise:

One of the principal Beauties of the Violin is the swelling or encreasing [*sic*] and softening the Sound; which is done by pressing the Bow upon the Strings with the Fore-finger more or less. In playing all long Notes the Sound should be begun soft, and gracefully swelled till it must be taken to draw the Bow smooth from one End to the other without any Interruption or stopping in the Middle.<sup>200</sup>

Patterns of chords employ alternating sets of fingers to increase facility, not to mention the likelihood that they'll be played in tune. Additionally, Corelli picks 'bright keys' for the violin that best highlight the brilliance of the instrument: D Major, A Major, G Major, E Major, etc.<sup>201</sup>

So when a virtuoso violinist performs these sonatas, what the audience hears is not struggle, but really pure *sprezzatura*: the illusion of effortless perfection. The way in which the piece is put together enables the violinist to present a great, embroiled mass of chords and counterpoint with not nearly as much effort as might be assumed by a listener. This affect of *sprezzatura* was a key element to other violinists in presenting themselves as physical spectacle. Through carefully engineering these effects, Corelli is demonstrating his own distinction as a composer by providing a blueprint in Op. 5 on how to amaze ergonomically.

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<sup>199</sup> The newer, longer "sonata" style bows, which were becoming increasingly common in Italy by this point, also would have increased this ability. Robert Seletsky. "New Light on the Old Bow" *Early Music* 31 (May 2004): 292.

<sup>200</sup> Francesco Geminiani, *The Art of Playing on the Violin*, Op. IX (London: J. Johnson, 1751), 2.

<sup>201</sup> Rita Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1996), 135-138.

### *Example: Sonata VI*

A perfect example of the extremely idiomatic violin writing in Op. 5 is Sonata VI in A Major, the last in the first half of the collection, labeled ‘per la chiesa’ in the 1710 edition.<sup>202</sup> In the first *Grave* movement, it is apparent from the very first measure: a great simple yawning gesture makes use of both the open E and A-strings, while outlining the basic A Major triad [C#-E-A].<sup>203</sup> The use of the open strings, while not only easy to play, makes the most out of the violin’s natural resonance, creating an opening that sonically glows with overtones. The opening phrase between the violin and bass outlines what Robert Gjerdingen would call a ‘Romanesca-Prinner’ combination, one of the most common opening contrapuntal harmonic progressions in eighteenth-century music, creating a harmonically stable opening from which to build and expand.<sup>204</sup>

This stability and reliance on the open strings in such a musically simple figure creates the opportunity for a showman performer to display alternative forms of effortless *sprezzatura*, such as playing that figure while lazily running their open hand along the neck of the instrument, arriving back in position at the nut at the scroll just in time to catch the B in the second measure. Even with the simplest notes on the page, engaging violinists could use moments like these to put the focus on their physical bodies, versus the musical notes they are producing, on display.

[See Example 5.1 for score with marked fingerings], For a list of fingerings, see the Glossary.

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<sup>202</sup> I’m referring to the 1710 Estienne Roger Edition “with Corelli’s Ornaments” As I get access to the 1700 print I will make adjustments. Arcangelo Corelli, *Sonate a Violino e Violone o Cimbalò, Opera Quinta* (Amsterdam: Estienne Roger, 1710), facsimile, vol. 231 (New York: Performer’s Facsimiles)

<sup>203</sup> On gut strings, the A and E sound much more warm and significantly less brassy or tinny than modern metal e-strings.

<sup>204</sup> Robert O. Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 46-47.

Example 5.1: Sonata VI in A Major, “Grave,” measures 1-8

The image displays a musical score for measures 1-8 of Sonata VI in A Major, "Grave". The score is in 3/4 time and A major. It consists of two systems. The first system shows measures 1-4 for Violin and Basso. The second system shows measures 5-8 for Violin (Vln.) and Bassoon (B.C.). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 above notes and 5-7 below notes. Measure 5 features a high B on the e-string for the violin.

In the second measure, the consequent half of the phrase, the rest of the melody nicely ascends and descends entirely on the A string, essentially fingered as 1-2-3-4-3-2-0. The conclusion of the first phrase then reaches up to cadence nicely on E, which by this point, since it keeps dipping back to A-string notes (b/d#), would be fingered with a 4<sup>th</sup> finger, or the player shifting in to 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> position to use a stronger finger for a cadential trill. If the player chose to shift, it would create another opportunity to bring the audience member’s attention to the left hand as it again moved up the fingerboard, making a visual invitation to watch the performer’s fingers deftly dance about in a delicate ornamented figure of his choosing.

This first opening gesture then perfectly fits transposed up a 5<sup>th</sup> on the e-string in bars 5-8, where not even really any fingering changes are necessary. But the high B cannot be played on an open string, so it doesn’t have quite the same luscious relaxedness as the first.

While the open simplicity of this first melody is both grand and spacious on its own, this same openness means that it becomes quite easy for the violinist to add passing tones if they so

choose, imbuing their *performed* version of the sonata with their sense of *ingegno*. The fact that the two consecutive phrases are nearly identical from the point of view of execution allows the player to have the security of the same fingering pattern, giving them a maximally clear framework for bringing in their own cadential or ornamental patterns. Throughout this movement, the melody is based around the open strings and scalar passages. Because the movement is in A Major, the melody is pivoting between the open A and E strings in measures 9-13, and also in measures 22 to the end, after the return to the tonic. Even when the movement briefly flirts with a cadence on *f#* minor in bar 16, Corelli keeps it all on the E-string to maintain the shimmery timbre, avoiding any half shifting or other in-between squirming around which would impair the free exercise of ornamentation. In the sequence that follows, each piece is based around descending thirds, leaving spaces to ornament. Filling in the steps between descending thirds is about the easiest form of beginning ornamentation there is, and so the passage could be construed as an open invitation for the performer to begin adding them in.

In the second movement, a brisk *Allegro*, Corelli displays his comfort with writing contrapuntally for the violin. By creating some of the first fugues written for the violin, these composers were associating the instrument with the *stile antico*, the ‘serious’ or ‘antique style.’ The fugue had strong associations with ecclesiastical music in Italy (which is why we see them only in the first half of Corelli’s Op. 5, the ‘per la chiesa’ sonatas) as well as being a marker of social legitimacy, representing the mastery of compositional process. As the highest form of contrapuntal art, the fugue was a measure of a *musicus’s* compositional craft, demonstrating a deep knowledge of the rules of musical logic. This was a genre for ‘serious’ composers, not just court fiddle players.

Writing a fugue was the musical equivalent of flashing one’s composer credentials. By bringing the fugue into a humble violin sonata, composers like Corelli are writing their marks of

craft into the fabric of the sonatas themselves, elevating themselves and their sonatas as ‘works,’ as opposed to flights of virtuosic fancy.

From the outset, we get an energized variant of the open string theme from the first movement: a fugue subject that outlines the A major triad in the first measure and then through an octave skip lands on E (just as the first movement melody does), pointing to the end on E through a “3-2-1” fingering. The violin splits off into two voices now, the second voice giving the answer of the fugue, starting on E this time, while the first voice harmonizes with the counter-subject in homophonic thirds and sixths below. While the sudden appearance of double-stops technically raises the bar and increases the energy of the piece relative to everything that has gone before, the two voices actually lie relatively easily in the hand. Rather than showcase the violin’s “singing” ability, Corelli is showcasing left-hand technique and control, and the violin’s ability to ‘behave itself’ (as it were) and engage with serious, respectable styles.

So in effect, Corelli is combining the best of both musical styles into the sonata. His melodiousness, and the opportunities for free showy ornamentation that come with it, are just as violinistic as serious, learned fugal process. Considering the kinds of court and church musical productions he was a part of, either directing, being concertmaster, or both, it comes as no surprise that he presents his mastery of them back to back.

But serious discipline does not have to come at the expense of comfort and ease. Corelli, having been working as a professional violinist for over 35 years when Op. 5 was published, knew the importance of the sonic effect of flashy violin techniques, but also the pragmatic side of how to pull these effects off in a more ergonomic way. He deliberately makes the performance of these “serious” techniques as fool-proof as possible.

As exemplified in his chordal writing here in Sonata VI, Corelli knew that holding down all four fingers on the string for an extended amount of time playing strings of chords builds tension in

the hand. Since tension leads to fatigue (and failure), it is important to build mini-breaks into the chordal passages to allow for the release of tension and reduce hand fatigue. So, in the first five bars, Corelli creates contrapuntal lines that utilize the front of the hand (4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> finger focused) positioning, and then alternates with a release to chords using open strings. This allows one to play successive batches of chords without excess left-hand tension building up, and thus be able to sustain the technique for longer periods of time. This use of tension-release in the fingering patterns allows the player to gauge their physical stamina through the piece in terms of points of tension and release. [Please see Example 5.2 on the next page for score with marked fingerings]

**Example 5.2: Sonata VI in A Major, “Allegro,” measures 1-8**

The musical score for Example 5.2 consists of two systems of staves. The first system shows measures 1 through 4. The second system shows measures 5 through 8. The score is written in treble and bass clefs with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first system includes measures 1-4, and the second system includes measures 5-8. The score is annotated with numerous fingering numbers (0-4) above and below notes, and rests, indicating specific fingerings for each note. The bass line in the first system is mostly rests, with a few notes in measure 4. The bass line in the second system is more active, with notes and rests throughout.

One of the ways in which a violinist compensates for the fact that there are no frets or other lines on the fingerboard to give a correct spot for pitch placement means that a violinist artificially “creates” it through his hand, attempting to move from one stable hand position to the next,

sometimes called a blocked hand frame (considering the term ‘blocking’ from theater, in which actors lay out their marks on the stage). By using one finger as an anchor or reference point, a violinist can better judge the correct placement of the other three. Here is how the above example is constructed: Starting from the opening e-unison played with 4 and open E (0), the next two chords can be easily done in first position by holding down 4<sup>th</sup> finger as an anchor and just then placing 2 and 3 on the e-string. In the second beat of bar 3, the minor sixth is easily reached by swapping 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> fingers across the strings. On beat three, the blocked hand frame continues, with the 4<sup>th</sup> finger trading back again to play E on the A string, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> finger just tucking down onto G# on the E string.

In the next two chords, these five beats of 4<sup>th</sup>-finger-focused front-of-hand tension are progressively released by a passage that doesn’t use the 4<sup>th</sup> finger at all, with d-f# (played with 3<sup>rd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> finger) and then C#-E (played with 2-0), and B-E (played 1-0), with the penultimate eighth-note on an octave, which is about the most neutral (in terms of tension and harmonies) position the hand frame can be in. This prepares the hand for inherent tension in the first triple-stops of the piece, in the cadential figure that follows.

All violinists strategize their fingering patterns in terms of tension-release as a survival mechanism to endure long passages of chords; Corelli’s passage has this strategy written into it. Corelli’s extremely idiomatic and compact way of laying out this fugue creates a piece that shows off the “wow factor” of playing two voices of a fugue with a (mainly) single-voiced instrument. By putting the third voice in the bass, Corelli smartly also takes some of the pressure off of the violinist’s already engaged fingers!

Quite the opposite approach may be seen in J.S. Bach’s fugues from his solo sonatas BWV 1001, 1003, and 1005. In particular, the long episodes in the C Major fugue of BWV 1005 severely test the stamina of the player with long, unbroken successions of 4-note chords (something Corelli

hardly ever writes) while executing a four-voice fugue unaccompanied (without the benefit of the bass player filling out one voice)-- m. 207-246 in particular are taxing because it is the third time a section of this type appears in the piece! What makes the Bach Sonatas and Partitas particularly problematic for the performer are the sheer lengths of these fugues compared to Corelli. A Corelli fugue will run approximately 2 minutes, whereas Bach's C-Major Fugue (the longest he wrote for any instrument, incidentally) tops out at over 5 minutes. It seems that Bach is attempting the same kind of fugal 'legitimizing' of the violin as Corelli had done 20 years earlier, only Bach is upping the ante quite seriously by removing the second player, adding a voice, and doubling the length.

The third kind of writing that Corelli employs in Sonata VI (and in the rest of the *Sonate per la chiesa* in Op. 5), is in what I have dubbed "moto perpetuo" style, or continuous 16<sup>th</sup>-note movements. Here Corelli pays attention to the same kinds of fingering details when chords are broken up or arpeggiated as he does when they are played together as double-stops. And he is thoughtful and idiomatic about bowing as well, favoring string crossings that start on the lower-pitched string on the first note of every beat, such as in bars 16 and 17. This works physically with the bowing of the performer, as the heavier frog pulling a down-bow on the down-beat (the "rule of down-bow"<sup>205</sup>) is helped by gravity to propel the bow to the next (higher-pitched) string. This directional bowing helps the player increase resonance during a pedal-point passage. [See Example 5.3]

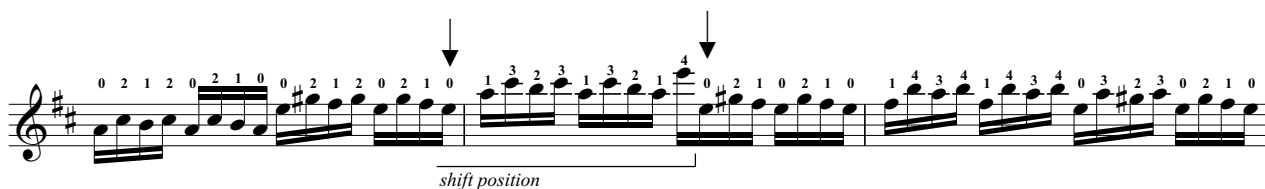
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<sup>205</sup> See Glossary



hand position without much planning (as in a French-shift, or replaced-finger shift).<sup>206</sup> Open strings before and after left hand displacements are particularly helpful if one plays as Corelli did, without either shoulder- or chinrest; the added freedom of the open string note for shifting could reduce tension on the hand.<sup>207</sup> If Corelli, or those for whom he wrote, were playing off-shoulder,<sup>208</sup> well-placed implied shifting points or open-string shifts such as this one would be even more necessary as an open string shift allows the hand to fully release from the fingerboard and move more freely to the new position. [See Example 5.5 with fingerings marked]

**Example 5.5: Sonata VI in A Major, “Allegro” (3rd Movement), measures 5-7**



While Corelli’s compositional style is characterized by its ease and convenience for the performer, it is not determined by it. Even Corelli has his awkward moments where he makes the violinist get creative. But it is those little surprises that keep the performer on his toes, and subtly sorts out the professionals who can smooth those out with *sprezzatura* and ease, from those who can’t. What Corelli is doing through his idiomatic writing in Op. 5 is establishing for the first time a set of musical and technical norms, while revealing the way in which they can be expertly accomplished. In doing so, he showcases his knowledge by embedding it into sonatas that

<sup>206</sup> See the Introductory Glossary to revisit this term.

<sup>207</sup> See the Introductory Glossary to revisit this term.

<sup>208</sup> This technique was particularly used by English and French violinists by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, not by the Italians. While it was falling out of fashion, playing off-shoulder was common enough still at the end of the seventeenth-century. For an in-depth discussion of the mechanics of off-shoulder playing, see: David Douglas, “The Violin: Its technique and style.” *Performer’s Guide to Seventeenth-Century Music*. ed. Jeffery Kite-Powell, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 2012): 168-184.

professionals can use to impress others by their ease, and amateurs can use as a tool to achieve a new level of achievement.

*Composition: Everything in its right place*

Some critics of Corelli have not been content to deplore the lack of flashiness in the Op. 5 sonatas; they have also pointed to a supposed lack of invention and imagination. We see this in Pincherle's remark: "his [Corelli's] originality lay in not having any..." and also in Burney/Twining's description of Corelli's Adagios as "Long and Dry."

What was revolutionary about Corelli's sonatas was that they were so *anti-revolutionary*. (In this regard, Pincherle might be on to something). In his Op. 5 Corelli was much less concerned with the publication of technical flash than he was focused on demonstrating compositional craft through conventional harmonic, rhythmic, melodic and formal choices, as well as the previously discussed deep understanding of idiomatic norms of violin playing.<sup>209</sup> He wasn't aiming this collection only at the professionals after all, but also at the connoisseurs.

I have already mentioned that in the first 4 bars of the first movement of Sonata VI, Corelli utilizes two of the most common treble-bass contrapuntal schemata in all of eighteenth century music, the Romanesca and the Prinner. Robert Gjerdingen has shown how by 1700 the use of such schemata was becoming an expected part of a well-educated musician's work. More importantly, it was just as expected that a well-educated listener, a true *uomo di virtù*, would be able to pick out these schemata and follow how they were incorporated into the new composition. "Eighteenth century courtly listening habits seem to have favored music that provided opportunities for acts of judging,

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<sup>209</sup> Please note that in this case I am NOT talking about the 1710 Estienne Roger edition, published with "Corelli's graces, as he played them," but I am referring to the original 1700 Gasparo Pietra Santo edition from Rome, which contained none of the elaborations. Arcangelo Corelli, *Sonata a Violino e Violone o Cimbalo* (Rome: Gasparo Pietra Santa, 1700).

for the making of distinctions, and for the public exercise of discernment and taste.”<sup>210</sup> This echoes Andrew Dell’Antonio’s concept of “discourse about,” the seventeenth-century culture of elite conversation and debate. The performance showcased the violinist. The discussion showcased the *audience*.

The Romanesca is marked by a combination of the bass descending in a sequential manner (scale degrees 1-5, 6-3, 4-1, or its stepwise variant which starts with a 1-7 descent) paired with a treble line starting on scale degree 3 and descending step-wise (3-2-1-7-6-5).<sup>211</sup> It was typically used as an opening gesture, and that is how Corelli uses it here. The Romanesca leads directly into its common closing-gesture counterpart, the Prinner. In the Prinner, the bass typically does a motion of 4-3-2-5-1 to cadence on the tonic, paired with the treble voice descending roughly stepwise again from 6-5-4-3 on the tonic cadence. We can see these two moves combined in the opening of Corelli’s Sonata VI. Additionally, the longer phrase ends by means of a modulating Prinner. [Please see the Example 5.6 on the next page]

**Example 5.6: Sonata VI in A Major, “Grave” (1<sup>st</sup> movement), measures 1-8**

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<sup>210</sup> Robert O. Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style*, 4.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

The image displays two musical staves, each with a violin part (top) and a bassoon part (bottom). The top staff is labeled 'Violin' and 'Basso', and the bottom staff is labeled 'Vln.' and 'B.C.'. Both staves are in the key of D major (two sharps) and common time (C). The music is divided into three sections: 'Romanesca', 'Prinner', and 'Modulating Prinner'. Fingering is indicated by numbers 1-5 in boxes above notes. The bassoon part includes a '5' above the first measure. The 'Romanesca' section spans the first three measures, 'Prinner' spans the next three, and 'Modulating Prinner' spans the final three. The bassoon part has a sharp sign above the final note of the 'Prinner' section.

As an experienced producer of music for the discerning Roman tastes, Corelli had these connoisseurs in mind for his publications as well as his live performances, and in so doing, proves he understands their specific kind of discourse. By writing something that is so predictable, he is not only composing with the violinist in mind, but the listener as well. By basing his sonatas upon stock figures, he is demonstrating a mastery of process as well as a mastery of the instrument itself.

Additionally, Corelli is allowing his educated listeners to demonstrate *their* mastery of the *galant* idiom, by inviting them to “know” what comes next. Interaction with the schemata was followed by composers, players and audiences, who all participated in the musicking of *galant* works. Gjerdingen defines the aims of patrons of this music: “Galant music then, was music commissioned by galant men and women to entertain themselves as listeners, to educate and amuse themselves as amateur performers, and to bring glory to themselves as patrons of the wittiest, most charming,

most sophisticated and fashionable music that money could buy.”<sup>212</sup> The use of schemata wasn’t the only thing that musickers noticed. They also noticed the sometimes surprising ways in which schemata were put together, demonstrating Corelli’s new, Enlightened form of *ingegno*. For this new *galant* spectator, inventiveness was not revealed in the spectacular, but in the subtle. “For the composers, making works worthy of praise required being able to produce exemplars of every schema correct in every detail. The more passive knowledge of patrons could be gleaned from frequent listening to the typical phrases of gallant [sic] music. The active, operationalized knowledge of composers was carefully taught to them by music masters- maestros.”<sup>213</sup> An amateur listener could congratulate herself for experiencing a ‘new’ work as somehow familiar, while an experienced, educated fellow musician could appreciate a whole other register of Corelli’s *sprezzatura*—the effortlessness with which he subtly combined something like a Romanesca-modulating Prinner to multi-monte-fonte sequence.

Corelli was demonstrating a mastery of many styles in these sonatas-- the *stile antico*, popular dance-types like the *Follia* and, with his careful and calculated distillation of formal schemata, the new modern style, one that by 1700 was fast becoming *the* mode of composition for all of Europe, and would remain so for the entire eighteenth century: the *galant*. Rather than view Corelli’s conventionality as a strike against him, I argue that it speaks to his unique position of being at the center of the newest, most modern styles of the day. Corelli was translating these schemata from their operatic origins, and transforming them into an idiomatic version for the violin. In a way, Corelli’s adaptation of the *galant* tropes and formal schemata developed in the Neapolitan opera scene followed in the tradition of Marini, Castello, and Fontana 80 years before, when they looked to contemporary dramatic and poetic practice and incorporated elements of the *stile concitato* and the *la bella maniera* into their violin sonatas.

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<sup>212</sup> Robert O. Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style*, 5.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 25

We need to re-think the traditional denigration of Corelli's skills, as violinist and as composer, in view of the tastes and conceptual frameworks that he, his colleagues, and the countless people who bought his publications would have had. Conventionality in *galant* compositional process certainly wasn't viewed as a defect at the time! It was the expectation and distinction of status and class, the newest marker of *virtù*, and it was the latest, greatest fashion and standard in the production of music making. So, in being conventional, Corelli was actually being at the forefront of musical fashion.

The subsequent history of op. 5 demonstrates that it was one of the most popular sets of works showcasing this new standard ever published. In essence, it seems that Corelli took a strategic, self-conscious gamble to consolidate the trends of the new fashion into one sonata collection, effectively proclaiming his composition style the next big thing. Even his publication date and dedicatee: the first of January 1700, and a dedication to Sophia Charlotte, Electress of Brandenburg, to garner favor with the Northern Courts, with an eye to publication contracts with the fast-growing Amsterdam presses, suggests his awareness of the dawning of a new era. The gamble abundantly paid off, and the proclamation became reality.

It's like tasting the most delicious vanilla bean cake: it's not as if the average person has never had vanilla cake before—on the contrary, vanilla cake is practically the default flavor for cake mixes (even the word 'vanilla' has come to be associated with being plain, ordinary and dull)—but when she has it from her favorite bakery—a bakery that puts together butter, sugar, vanilla, and flour in the most delicious combination, perhaps with a surprise hint of lemon peel-- that is what makes the experience delightful. It's the subtlety of an artisan baker that transforms the ordinary into something both interesting and delicious. The frosting to Corelli's 'vanilla bean cake' of musical conventionality was the lovely lacey fondant ornamentation that later virtuosos added to the Op. 5

sonatas, maintaining convention while dusting it with sparkly sugar topping, making the presentation of the sonatas into the ephemeral marvel of a present-tense performance.

Corelli's conventionality can be seen in larger-scale formal structures as well. In the first six sonatas, Corelli codified the slow-fast-slow-fast multi-movement form first seen 50 years earlier in works by Maurizio Cazzati in Bologna. Corelli's sonatas are approximately equal in duration to the single-movement sonatas of Uccellini, or even the multi-movement sonatas of Biber. But what is different is the streamlined way in which he standardizes the quality of slow, the quality of fast, and the affects and kinds of motion that are present in each movement, within a dependable set of structures of contrast. This sectionalization of affects and styles in fact makes Corelli's sonatas FEEL like a longer amount of time passes, even if it hasn't according to the clock.

Each of Sonatas I-VI works in this way:

- I. Slow, lyrical prelude
- II. Fugue-like quick duple movement
- III. Brief vivace, perpetual-motion like movement
- IV. Slow movement in a contrasting key, similar stately lyrical affects
- V. Another fugue-like movement, often in triple meter

In the fugal movements, the quality of motion and affectual energy is one of discovery. Corelli takes the *ricercar-canzona* formal processes of 'present little motive, work with it until you can't any more, then start over again with a new motive' and combines it with the fast passagework energy of the earlier spectacle sonatas. Only in the fugal movements does he use double and triple-stop chords and bariolage-style arpeggiation. They are where Corelli allows the most violinistic experimentation and overt flash within the tightly contained and conventionalized parameters that he allowed himself

in Op. 5.. Likewise, in the Vivace movements, Corelli uses nothing but rapid-fire flurries of notes, and the quality of motion is one of brilliant, almost frenetic energy, one that can't be (or maybe shouldn't) be sustained longer than 1-2 minutes. The slow, lyrical preludes and middle adagios present long lines, which exude pristine stateliness or melancholy. Through this setup, Corelli maintains the juxtaposition of affect, creating a larger structure of experience with suspense and payoffs, places to listen, places in which to relax—not all that different than Marini 80 years prior, except he lets it happen in an orderly organized fashion, instead of as a pure shock to the system. The eighteenth-century connoisseur appreciated fireworks, but preferred to know where and when they were to be set off.

### *Composer vs. Performer*

Corelli's publication history and critical reception both speak to an emerging split in the public persona of virtuoso-composers in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The virtuoso, on the one hand, was one who combined the act of composition and performance into a single real-time act. The idea was that no one else could possibly play these works like the virtuoso himself. Biber and Colombi, while overlapping temporally with Corelli, subscribed wholly to this self-identification, embedding the ideal of the virtuoso as a key part of their published and private personas. However, the simplified construction of Corelli's Op. 5 gives us a work that was not the representation of any one performance, previous or future: Corelli the composer is at least as prominent as Corelli the virtuoso. Such creations took on a life of their own, existing autonomously from their creator, and therefore getting the title of Opera, or "Works."

In the case of Corelli's Op. 5, these "works" were very quickly adopted as unfrosted cakes

for the next hundred years for virtuosi to decorate with their own special frosting and fondant. Not even 10 years after the original 1700 print, Estienne Roger in Amsterdam published a second print of Op. 5 with “Corelli’s Graces, as he played them.” It seems Roger was blatantly capitalizing on Corelli’s reputation as performer and improviser, giving his music buyers the illusion that they were in some way there, in touch with the maestro. Roger published yet another edition 6 years later, changing the wording to “as he wished them to be played.”<sup>214</sup> Neal Zaslaw suggests that this change points to a divergence in the purpose of publishing a set of ornaments in the first place:

But what could it possibly mean that these are Corelli's ornaments 'as he played them,' given that we believe that he would not have played them the same way in varying acoustics and for differing occasions? In attempting to answer this question we should not forget a fundamental difference between music in manuscript and published music: in general, music in manuscript was tailored to the tastes and requirements of a particular time and place; published music, on the contrary, had to be calculated for tastes and in unknown many requirements times and places.<sup>215</sup>

It seems that Roger may have changed the subtitle to accommodate this possibility of a more pedagogical purpose to the graces. These were not necessarily meant to be a record of Corelli’s own ornamentation style, as he would have displayed it in Ottoboni’s court (thereby keeping the published sonatas tied to the idea of Corelli the violinist), but instead more likely meant to be understood as an extension of Corelli’s pedagogical and compositional prowess, providing a guide for other aspiring violinists to build on, and therefore adding on another layer of “the work.”<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Neal Zaslaw, “Ornaments for Corelli’s Sonatas, Op. 5,” 109.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> There is still a debate on whether or not these were even Corelli’s graces to begin with. However, as Robert Seletsky writes, considering that Roger was in negotiation over the publication of Op. 6 shortly before the 1710 edition went to

And this discrepancy continued on throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century as the practice of Corelli-ornamentation developed in two directions: that which was pure frosting on top of the cake, and that which represented a recomposing of the actual movements, transforming short dance movements into theme and variation structures. The first kind largely remained in manuscript copies such as versions by the 18<sup>th</sup> century violinists, Johann Helmich Roman, Matthew Dubourg and Michael Festing, etc., and has been documented in Neal Zaslaw's invaluable work. The second direction involved re-composing or rearranging for other ensembles, such as Vivaldi's orchestral versions of Corelli's *Follia*, Veracini's "transcription" of Corelli's Sonata IX (in which he flips the basso continuo line with that of the more simplistic violin part), or Geminiani's "theme and variations" on the melody of that same piece.

As the many subsequent extant versions attest, the conventionality of Corelli's Op. 5 demonstrated an open invitation for fellow violinists to design their own experimentation and ornamentation. Harmonically, each key area is established, then Corelli uses a series of sequences—typically *galant* Montes or Fontes—to move to not-too-distantly-related keys, and works back home to the tonic. By utilizing the *galant* schemata, Corelli creates a predictable order for each piece: Each movement is logical unto itself, and is in its place demonstrating both the pleasure of discovery for players and listeners, and the mastery of traditional forms on the part of the composer. Nothing extreme in affect. No sudden changes of tempo or mood. No unprepared or unsequenced harmonic shifts. Well-balanced, well sequenced, and perfectly proportioned. And it all just works beautifully, as a display of perfect virtù should.

In Sonata VII-XI, Corelli continues in an even more streamlined fashion. This time the slow-fast-slow-fast formula is a kind of dance suite. The dance suite had been around, and made up a substantial part of the Bolognese printing tradition that he musically grew up in, but again, he

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print, it would have been bad business practice to publish mis-representing material for a best-selling composer whom you were trying to keep as a client.

consolidates the way it is done, re-presenting it to a new audience as less about a functional collection, and more about a demonstration of the proper, virtuous way to compose one.

I. Preludio: Adagio or Largo (with the exception of Sonata VII)

II. Fast dance movement (Giga, Allemanda or Corrente)

III. Slow dance movement (Adagio interlude or Sarabanda)

IV. Fast dance movement (Giga or Gavotta)

V. [Only in Sonatas X and XI] Contrasting fast dance movement (Giga or Gavotta)

While the 18th century people attending a function where Corelli would be performing were likely to have some idea how to dance a Giga or Corrente, these were not suites for dancing.

Rather, these pieces engage fashionable society through evocation of the bodily language of the dance types. (This is the exact strategy that J.S. Bach will use in his own dance suites, including the unaccompanied works for violin). Just as Corelli utilizes the schemata to invoke fashion and society through the languages of pitch, the dance-types also invoke them through the languages of rhythm.

*Conclusion:*

Together, the two halves of Op. 5 provide an unusually complete presentation of an unusually complete instrumental musician. Corelli lays out the most up-to-date stylistic options available to instrumental composers of his generation, as well as providing a well-balanced scope for creative options available to performers. Corelli was not trying to prove through publication that he was the world's greatest technical virtuoso on the violin: he didn't have to because he already had that reputation. What he did prove was that he also possessed the distinction of being able to craft the most idealized, idiolectic kind of violin sonata possible, capable of founding an enduring tradition and consolidation of trends. He defined his published persona as a well-educated and fashionable *musicus*, and made his work appealing to listeners and to virtuosi of all kinds throughout Europe for the next 100 years. Through Corelli's Op. 5, eighteenth-century violinists would define

their own performing and composing, inspiring *Meraviglia* in their audiences as they transformed a work that everyone knew into an experience of their own invention.

~*Fine*~

## APPENDIX I

List of Mimetic/Pictorial Pieces for Violin and other String Instruments by Austrian Violinists (All pieces are for solo violin and basso continuo unless otherwise noted). Many pieces existed only in manuscript, hence the numerous nebulous composition dates.

### **Johann Heinrich Schmelzer (~Vienna, 1620-1680):**

“Polnische Sackpfeifen” (before 1680)

Sonata “Cucu” (~1664)

Fechtschule (before 1680)

### **Johann Heinrich Schmelzer/Heinrich Ignaz Biber:**

Sonata Representativa <sup>217</sup> (~1669)

### **Johann Jakob Walther (Florence, Dresden, Mainz, 1650-1717)**

Imitative Pieces in *Hortuculus Chelicus* (1688)

“Serenata a un Coro di Violini, Organo tremolante, Chitarrino, Pivo, Trombe e Timpani, Lira Todesca, & Harpa smorzata, il tutto sopra un Violino Solo”

Galli e Galline (Roosters and Hens)

Scherzo D’Augelli con il Cuccu

Leuto Harpeggiante e Rossiguolo

### **Johann Paul von Westhoff (Dresden, Wittenberg, 1656-1705)**

Sonata in A Major “alla Guerra” (1682)\*

### **Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber (Kromeriz, Salzburg, 1644-1704)**

Sonata a 6 “Campanarum, volgo Glockeriana” (~1673)

Serenada a 5 “Der Nachwechter” (1673)

Battalia a 9 (1673)

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<sup>217</sup> Long believed to be by Biber. Charles Brewer argues that it may be by Schmelzer, due both to the circumstantial evidence of surviving letters between Schmelzer and Prince-Bishop Karl, and manuscript copywork irregularities. See Charles Brewer, *The Instrumental Music of Schmelzer, Biber, Muffat, and their Contemporaries*, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011, pages 106-113.

## APPENDIX II

Photos of the "Tromba" from MS I-MOe, Mus. E. 282

A photograph of a handwritten musical score for Tromba. The manuscript is on aged, yellowed paper. At the top, the title "Tromba" is written in cursive, followed by "Trompa à Distincedo". The score consists of ten staves of music. The notation is dense, featuring many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, often beamed together. There are several dynamic markings, including "f" (forte) and "p" (piano), scattered throughout the piece. The paper shows signs of wear, including some staining and a small tear near the top left corner. The right edge of the page shows the beginning of the next page, with some musical notation visible.

A page of handwritten musical notation on aged, yellowed paper. The page contains ten staves of music, each beginning with a clef and a key signature. The notation is dense and includes various note values, rests, and articulation marks. In the middle of the page, there are five dynamic markings: *p*, *f*, *p*, *f*, *p*. The paper shows signs of wear, including some staining and a small tear at the bottom right corner.

Handwritten musical notation on three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings such as 'p' and 'pizz'. The second and third staves continue the musical piece with similar notation and dynamics.



CC. I + 21 + J

*The Virtuoso's Idiom:  
Spectacularity in the Seventeenth-Century Violin Sonata*

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