

CORPUS OF EARLY KEYBOARD MUSIC

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General Editor

Michelangelo Rossi

WORKS FOR KEYBOARD

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF MUSICOLOGY

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15

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Edited by  
John R. White



AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF MUSICOLOGY

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## FOREWORD

The surviving keyboard works of Michelangelo Rossi “Dal Violino” are the main reliquiae of an astonishing composer whom time and history have treated but poorly. The dates of his birth and death are unknown, and only a few matters of record illuminate his life, despite the high praise of a contemporary for his arts of counterpoint and violin playing: “The excellence of his counterpoint is proportionate to the delicacy of sound, whence he has come to be celebrated and admired not only in Italy, and in Rome, but in other parts of Europe, to which may be added the truly angelic melody of his violin.” These words preface the printed libretto of his opera *Andromeda*, written for the wedding celebration of Cornelio Bentivoglio and Costanza Sforza in Ferrara in 1638. Another opera, *Erminia sui Giordano*, was performed at the theater of the Barberini Palace in Rome in 1633. The composer was also active in Genova, Torino, and Forli, and is last heard of in Faenza in 1670. Two continuo arias preserved in Venice (Museo Correr Busta I. 15 N 12) complete the list of his known works other than the keyboard music printed here.

Collections of Rossi’s keyboard works were printed three, perhaps four times during his life. Of these printings, only two survive, and these seem to have been made from the same handsomely engraved plates with different title pages:

1. *Toccate e Corenti d’intavolatura d’Organo e Cimbalo . . . di novo ristampato da Carlo Ricarii, Roma, M. D. C. XXXXXVII, vendono in Parione alla Croce di Genova.*<sup>1</sup> Bologna, Bibl. mus. G. B. Martini BB 258, and Naples, Bibl. del Cons. 41.7.51.

2. *Toccate e Corrente per Organo, o Cembalo, in Roma, A spese di Gio. Battista Caifabri in Parione all’ Insegna della Croce di Genova.* A unique copy in Bologna, Bibl. mus. G. B. Martini BB 257.

Both include the first ten *toccate* and the ten *correnti* of our collection.

Inserted in the Bologna copy of No. 1 are twelve manuscript pages dated 1700 and 1701.<sup>2</sup> These are unique copies of our *Toccate XI–XIV*, the *Partite sopra La Romanesca*, and the two *Versetti*. The four toccatas are inscribed *non stampata*. There are other manuscript copies, but only of works from the printed collections, in British Museum Mss. Add. 24313 and 31446, and in Archives of the Minoritenkonvent, Ms XIV 699, in Vienna.

There have been two unsatisfactory modern editions, both are now out of print. The works of the 1657 collection appear in Vol. III of L. Torchi’s *L’Arte Musicale in Italia* (1897), and all the known keyboard works were edited by A. Toni in *Raccolta nazionale*

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1. “T” in the editorial notes to the composition.

2. “MS” in the editorial notes to the composition.

# Toccata Prima

The first system of musical notation for 'Toccata Prima' consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. Both are in common time (C). The music begins with a series of chords in the right hand and a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the left hand. The right hand features a melodic line with some grace notes and slurs.

The second system continues the piece. The right hand has a more active melodic line with slurs and grace notes. The left hand maintains a steady eighth-note accompaniment. There are some rests in the right hand, and the system ends with a trill in the right hand.

The third system shows a change in the right hand's texture, with more chords and a less active melodic line. The left hand continues with eighth notes. The system concludes with a trill in the right hand.

The fourth system features a more complex right-hand part with slurs and grace notes. The left hand continues with eighth notes. The system ends with a trill in the right hand.

The fifth system continues with a similar texture. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and grace notes, while the left hand plays eighth notes. The system ends with a trill in the right hand.

The sixth system concludes the piece. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and grace notes. The left hand continues with eighth notes. The system ends with a trill in the right hand.