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LIFE AND WORKS  
OF  
GIOVANNI GABRIELI



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## FOREWORD

Dear Reader: This book is a noble endeavor, dealing with one of the great creative minds of all time. In the world of music the man whose name the title of this book bears is a landmark of signal importance. He is an arresting figure and, little as we know about his person, an engaging man. Taken in historical context, he is a composer surpassed by none, a great architect of tonal edifice and a magician of sound.

To recapture across centuries the man, his life, his work, his cultural environment; to trace the appreciation of his contemporaries and, as long as it lasted, of succeeding years; to collect all pertinent documents and data; to study, describe and discuss a vast repertory, inevitably falling in the predicament when prose describes that which must be heard, and seen (yes, and seen!); to arrange the chronology and categories of this repertory and to assemble its bibliography; to collate and correlate and undertake the numerous ancillary labors demanded by a book of this kind was indeed to undertake an arduous task of many years. It was, in fact, an act of devotion and, whatever minor defects the work may show (and what is it of man free of defect?), it is a worthy contribution to our knowledge and enjoyment.

English is not the mother tongue of the man who wrote this book. Therefore, be indulgent if phrase is not always masterfully turned, if sentence does not sweep on and period take a noble span; if sense of idiom is at times troubled and the ear occasionally jarred. In short, if the prose is not music, pray forbear and think, instead, of the music of Giovanni Gabrieli. Consider the high purpose and the real achievement of the work, and imagine how, if only as a modest monument to Giovanni, this book would gladden his heart were he to appear among us. (Remember too that contemporary musicological prose even at its best can scarcely lay claim to literary supremacy . . . .)

Vive felix.

A. C.

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## PREFACE

Some fifteen years ago I devoted considerable time to a study of the instrumental ensemble music of France, England and Italy in the period from *ca.* 1550 to *ca.* 1620. That is the period when instrumental ensemble music, later to be called also "absolute" music, began to be independent of vocal models and the system of modes; when an instrumental idiom started to develop and tonal music based on the triad and the major and minor modes had already superseded the old system, in fact if not in terminology; when dynamic signs and hints at orchestration made their appearance, and when composers began to experiment with audible devices for structural articulation.

I was deeply impressed by the originality and variety of Italian music, and within Italian music by the fertility of ideas, the intensity of emotion, the variety of expression, and the intellectual direction shown in the music of Giovanni Gabrieli. A few years later - during which I was absorbed by mediaeval music - I returned to Gabrieli and read Winterfeld's monumental monograph devoted to his music and to that of some of his contemporaries.

I decided to free this work from the dust of the library shelves accumulated during a century and a quarter by translating it into English, and by bringing it up to date, interlarding it with sections based on fresh research. I translated the first two chapters. But as soon as it came to the translation of the chapters on the music itself, it became clear that the task would be futile. Neither Winterfeld's viewpoint nor his method would be in harmony with present-day criteria. I resolved to make a fresh start and discuss Gabrieli's music on the ground of personal study, preceded by a biography of the composer which Winterfeld neglected to include. The present study is the result of this fresh start. However, as a tribute to that great pioneer of musicology, I include a modified and much abbreviated translation of his first two chapters as historical background. In the main, their content is as valid today as it was a hundred and twenty-five years ago. It seemed to the writer, however, that some amplification was needed here and there, as well as some additions which are the result of more recent research. This appears in footnotes marked by letters starting with "a" on each page, while Winterfeld's own footnotes are consecutively numbered throughout the chapter.

During my study I read many prefaces to musical prints and writings on music, often as interesting as the music or treatise itself that follows. The fact that prefaces are valuable material for the student from historical, biographical, theoretical and aesthetic points of view surely does not need to be stressed. They are valuable, however, for their writers also, for a number of reasons. A preface is the only section of a book where the writer may use the first person singular with impunity, where he can explain his purpose, his method, apologize for shortcomings, and parry in advance the critical reader's attacks.

While sensitivity to criticism is generally a sign of lack of objectivity or even of a basic insecurity in a writer - since constructive criticism cannot be but of benefit to

IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF VENICE, east of the grand canal which winds its way serpentlike through the city, rises San Marco, the most eminent, though not the oldest church of the city, and in fact not even the cathedral of Venice in former times.

Two squares, the most prominent of the city, both named for St. Mark, are connected by the open area in front of it. To the left the *Piazzetta*, bordered by the Ducal Palace and the public library, leads directly to a large bay<sup>(a)</sup> southeast of the city. It offers a view of the long and narrow island of the *Giudecca* to the right and the smaller island of *S. Giorgio Maggiore* to the left, and leads the eye to the splendid marble palaces and churches adorning both islands.

In front of the main portals of the church is the larger *Piazza di S. Marco*, flanked by the palaces of the procurators, the open arcades of which were formerly divided by the Church of S. Geminiano, now demolished.<sup>(b)</sup>

Standing apart from the church, where the two squares meet, the belfry rises to a height of nearly four hundred feet. Before the eyes of the onlooker who has ascended the bell tower lie the entire city and the lagoons, with their islands extending as far as the mainland. Thus, the Church of St. Mark proclaims, through its site and surroundings alone, that it was the first and foremost church of a mighty, rich and highly cultivated free state.

All reports<sup>1</sup> set 827 as the founding year of the church. They relate that Buono and Rustico, Venetian citizens born in Malamocco and in Torcello respectively, happened to sojourn in Alexandria at the time when the pagans were beginning to raze the church which was built over the holy remains of St. Mark and was dedicated to him, in order to use the precious stones adorning it for a new palace to be built for their king. The wardens of the church, anxious lest these holy remains fall into the hands of the pagans and be desecrated, sold them to those two Venetians, who eluded the heathens by ruse, and took the remains to Venice where they were received as priceless treasure. They then induced the city to build a new church dedicated to the Evangelist. St. Mark was at the same time chosen to be patron saint of the city, in place of S. Theodore. This happened under the reigns of the Doges Giustiniano and Giovanni Partecipazio.<sup>(c)</sup> Partecipazio, who had made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, gave to the new church built over the remains of the saint the architectural form he saw over the sepulchre of the Lord in the Holy City: a basilica.<sup>2</sup>

This edifice stood for only a little over one hundred years. Pietro Candiano, the fourth Doge of this name and the fourteenth to reign over Venice, hated for his

(a) Called *Bacino San Marco*.

(b) The square is now closed by a building erected in Napoleon's time.

(c) The former was elected in 827, the latter 829.

<sup>1</sup> *Andreae Danduli Chronicon*, in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, Ludovicus Antonius Muratorius, ed., Milano, 1728, VIII, C. II, p. 6. [For the bibliography of Venetian history, see E. Cicogna: *Saggio di bibliografia veneziana*, Venice, 1847.]

<sup>2</sup> *Chronic. Danduli*, VIII, C. XIV, p. 34.

Even if nothing is explicitly said about it, the contents of this ordinance naturally lead to the conclusion that polyphonic singing and its development were considered first and foremost at that time, as only such consideration could make the possession of trained voices of different ranges seem desirable. About the performance of this newly trained choir, however, the reports are not any more precise than about the five organists who served the church during the 15th century.

The archives of the church show that, on August 20, 1490, Francesco Davo was elected as the first organist of the second organ.<sup>(a)</sup>

In the year 1491, the arrangements for sacred music at San Marco were completed. The church now had two organists, and a trained choir which at that time probably performed the works of the then flourishing excellent Flemish choir-master. Before this time, the choir seems to have been under control of the oldest singer, not of a special singing master. The first choirmaster to be listed by name was a priest, Fossa (de Cà Fossis), engaged on August 31, 1491. We know no more than his name. For, even though we find sacred music in later collections identified as Giovanni Fossa's,<sup>39</sup> these collections, compiled at the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th, contain only works by younger or older contemporaries of the compiler, or, at best, by composers of the immediately preceding generation. It is therefore probable that the music of a Giovanni Fossa they contain are works of a later master of that name. At any rate, they show the style of a later period.

It was at the beginning of the 16th century that a new light of sacred music rose resplendent in the person of an excellent foreigner, rightfully called the founder of the Venetian school. On December 12, 1527, Adrian Willaert was engaged as choir-master at St. Mark's. It was during his tenure (1527-1562) that the fame of Venetian music rose to unprecedented heights, as he founded not only a peerless school of singing, but also one of composition. And it is due to his pupils in composition - mainly organists, several of whom served at San Marco - that Venice and Venetian style gained a niche of honor in the history of music.

Willaert's most outstanding students were Cyprian De Rore and Zarlino. Zarlino served music less as a practising musician, rather almost exclusively as a mathematician.<sup>(b)</sup> Cyprian De Rore stood certainly higher as an artist.

<sup>39</sup> In G. Vicorinus: *Thesaurus litaniarum*, Munich, 1596, II, No. 12; J. Donfried: *Promptuarium*, Strasbourg, 1627, Part III, No. 56, 138; idem: *Viridarium musico-Marianum*, etc.

(a) Davo was, then, the first predecessor of Giovanni Gabrieli.

(b) I.e., as a theorist. Born in 1517, Zarlino studied Greek, Hebrew, mathematics and physical sciences. A Franciscan, he was ordained deacon in 1540, and took music lessons with Willaert only after being settled in Venice. Winterfeld, in connection with Zarlino, who had a wide reputation as a teacher, remarks that Peter (Jan Pieterszoon) Sweelinck journeyed from Deventer in Holland to Venice in 1557, to take instruction from Zarlino, and became under the latter's guidance the most skilled and famous organist of his time. (*WiG*, I, 29.) This statement is based on the erroneous belief that Sweelinck translated Zarlino's *Institutioni*. Sweelinck, as we know today, was born in 1562, five years after the date claimed by Winterfeld for his Venetian trip. For the perpetuation of this error, see M. Seiffert: "J. P. Sweelinck und seine direkten deutschen Schüler," *VfMW*, VII (1891), 152, and Michel Brenet: "Deux traductions françaises des *Institutiones Harmoniques* de Zarlino," *L'Année Musicale*, I (1911), 126. Seiffert refutes the attribution of these translations to Sweelinck (by Fétis), Lut, in his



1 Giovanni Gabrieli was born either in 1554, or in 1556, or in 1557.

The first date is suggested by an entry in the registers of the *Provveditori alla Sanità* (of the city of Venice) 844, *Necrologio* No. 50:

12 agosto 1612. Il Ser Zuane Gabrieli d'anni 58 da mal de pietra giorni 18, medico il Cerchieri, S. Samuele.

The second date is borne out by the entry of his death on August 12, 1612, at the age of 56, in the registers of the Church of S. Stefano.

The third date was given on a previous tombstone in the Church of S. Stefano, which stated that he died on August 12, 1613, at the age of 56.

The contradictions between these dates will be discussed below.

2 He studied music with his uncle Andrea.

This fact he amply acknowledged in his dedication of the *Concerti di Andrea et di Gio. Gabrielli*, 1587, to Jakob Fugger, and by the assiduity with which he tried to pay his debt of gratitude to his teacher by publishing many of the latter's works after his death.

3 Giovanni Gabrieli spent some time in his youth in Munich, at the Bavarian ducal court.

This fact is borne out by the following three documents preserved from the much larger number - now lost - of the expense account books of the ducal household:

1 260 a Johann Gabrieln vnnd Thomasen Fürsten Per Ire zwaj sumer Claider, Lautt der Zettl zalt fl. 40. [1578]	Paid to Giovanni Gabrieli and Thomas Fürst for their two summer suits, according to the note, florins 40. -
2 300 a Item Nachbemelten Personen zur Abfertigung bezallt Johann Gabrieln Organisten fl. 10. [1579]	Also paid to persons listed below as final payment to the organist G. Gabrieli fl. 10.-
3 301 Johann Gabrieln Organisten Per ein ausstendige Quodt. zallt fl. 24 vnnd dann für seinen Pueben Cossgelt. <sup>1</sup>	Paid to the organist G. Gabrieli for arrears of one quarter fl. 24.- and then money for the board of his boy. (Pupil? Orderly?)

It is corroborated by Gabrieli's sworn statement before the *procuratori* of the Church of St. Mark, on June 2, 1585, to the effect that he knew Giuseppe Guammì (or Guami) - an applicant to the vacated position of Vincenzo Bell'Haver, as organist of the first organ in San Marco - in Bavaria, where they were both in the service of the duke.

It is also attested to by the inclusion, in 1575, of his madrigal in two parts *Quando ero giovinetto - Hor ch'io son già vecchiarello* in a collection published by Cosmo Bottegari, where the contributing composers are identified in the title as "flourishing virtuosos of the Duke of Bavaria."

On the ground of these documents and the Bottegari publication, 1575 can be

<sup>1</sup> *Auszüge aus den Hofzahlamtsrechnungen*, Bd. 1551, in the Royal Bavarian County Archives, Munich. The documents are cited in A. Sandberger: *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Bayerischen Hofkapelle*, Bd. III, *Dokumente*, Leipzig (1895), 102 and 110.

IT IS DOUBTFUL WHETHER THERE WAS A GENERATION - barring any limitation of period or race - more historically minded and less eclectic than ours. Not that our generation approves of and delights in the music of all ages, countries and social strata. It has its idiosyncrasies, and disdains the music of the preceding generations much as their ancestors did with regard to their predecessors. But its attitude towards the music of exotic people, folk-music of all nations, and the music of the distant past is unprecedented. Compared to the late 19th century when, outside of Debussy and perhaps a handful of sophisticated Parisians, few had felt more than a passing curiosity for Oriental music, and even less for music of the 14th century - which by the way they had not even the opportunity to hear - our generation can, and does, choose among different recordings of the same historical works and of exotic music of all the tribes of the Earth. And while our choices and predilections have limits set to them by what is transcribed by scholars and published by recording companies, preferences for certain composers are clearly manifested. Following this public preference, more transcriptions, more public performances, and more recordings are offered, all of which contribute to a belated or renewed fame of the long forgotten composer.

Bach was, during his lifetime, never appreciated for his creative talents as much as for his organ playing, and had to be content with being ranked behind Telemann and Graun. His name was committed to almost complete oblivion for a hundred years, until Mendelssohn's historical and aesthetic clear-sightedness secured for him rebirth as well as immortality. Giovanni Gabrieli, on the other hand, was equally appreciated as composer and organist. His fame was, as in Bach's case, obliterated by the very things he pioneered in: the new forms, the new style, new outlook.

Artusi, in his *L'Artusi, ovvero delle imperfezioni della moderna musica*, quotes a stanza from Horace's tenth ode of his second book:

Saepius ventis agitur ingens  
Pinus et celsae graviore casu  
Decident turres feriuntque summos  
fulmina montis . . .<sup>1</sup>

It seems, however, that Artusi misapplied the meaning of Horace's lines, for we may doubt that Horace, by tall pines and lofty towers, meant compositions built on sand and without foundation, which was what Artusi meant as he went on to explain in his dialogue. Horace had in mind men of the caliber of Bach and Gabrieli, whose eclipse may be comparable to the toppling of the tall pine, but who would care for the disappearance of a worthless weed? To characterize Gabrieli, as also Bach, those lines which Gabrieli used to glorify his patrons, the Fuggers, can even more appropriately be quoted:

<sup>1</sup> 'Tis oftener the tall pine that is shaken by the wind; 'tis the lofty towers that fall with heavier crash, and 'tis the tops of the mountains that the lightning strikes. [Bennett]

## CHAPTER IV

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- 42 1600<sup>2</sup> Sacrarum Symphoniarum Continuatio  
43 1600<sup>3</sup> Honori et amori G. Gruberi  
44 1600<sup>4</sup> Flores musicae  
45 1600<sup>5</sup> Magnificat octo tonorum  
46 1600<sup>8</sup> Reprint of No. 20  
47 1601<sup>1</sup> Reprint of No. 19  
48 1601<sup>2</sup> Florida sive cantiones  
49 1601<sup>3</sup> Sacrae Symphoniae diversorum autorum  
50 1603 Florilegium . . . Erhardi Bodenschatz  
51 1604<sup>1</sup> Scielta de Madrigali a 5 voci  
52 1604<sup>2</sup> Fiori musicali . . . di novo stampati  
53 1605 Nervi d'Orfeo  
54 1607 Tabulatur Buch von . . . Bernhard Schmid  
55 1608 Canzoni per sonar . . . A. Raverii  
56 1609 Il Transilvano II  
57 1611 Promptuarii Musici . . . Pars Prima  
58 1612<sup>1</sup> Promptuarii Musici . . . Pars Altera  
59 1612<sup>2</sup> Musikalisches Streitkrantzlein  
60 1612<sup>3</sup> Reprint of No. 23  
61 1612<sup>4</sup> Delitiae Musicae  
62 1613<sup>1</sup> Promptuarii Musici Pars Tertia  
63 1613<sup>2</sup> Sacrae Symphoniae diversorum autorum  
64 1614 Reprint of No. 19  
65 1615<sup>1</sup> Sacrae Symphoniae, Liber II  
66 1615<sup>2</sup> Canzoni et Sonate  
67 1615<sup>3</sup> Reliquiae Sacrorum Concentuum  
68 1617<sup>1</sup> Nova Musices Organicae Tabulatura (Woltz)  
69 1617<sup>2</sup> Promptuarii Musici . . . Pars Quarta  
70 1618<sup>1</sup> Reprint of No. 19  
71 1618<sup>2</sup> Florilegium Portense . . . autore Erhardo Bodenschatz  
72 1618<sup>3</sup> Reprint of No. 52  
73 1619<sup>1</sup> Triumph der Dorothea  
74 1619<sup>2</sup> Otto ordini de Letaniae  
75 1620 Reprint of No. 36  
76 1621 Florilegii Portensis . . . Pars Altera  
77 1622 Reprint of No. 56  
78 1624 Erster Theil . . . Welscher Madrigalien  
79 1625 Reprint of No. 23  
80 1628<sup>1</sup> Missae ad praecipuos dies festos  
81 1628<sup>2</sup> Reprint of No. 29  
82 1630 Reprint of No. 80

11 *Secundus chorus Cantus a 8 (2 chori)*  
 Be - ne - di - ctus es Do - mi - nus

12 *Cantus a 7*  
 Be - ne - di - xis - ti Do - mi - ne

13 *Secundus chorus Tenor a 19 (4 chori)*  
 Buc - ci - na - te in ne - o me - ni - a tu - ba

14 *Cantus a 6*  
 Can - ta - - - te Do - mi - no

15 *Primus chorus Cantus a 8 (2 chori)*  
 Can - ta - te Can - ta - te Do - mi - no

16 *Primus chorus Cantus a 13 (3 chori)*  
 Con - fi - te - bor ti - bi Do - mi - ne

17 *Cantus a 6*  
 Con - gra - tu - la mi - ni

18 *Secundus chorus Decima vox a 10 (2 chori)*  
 De - us De - us me - us ad te de - lu - ce vi - gi - lo

19 *Primus chorus Cantus a 12 (2 chori)*  
 De - us De - us me - us res - pi - ce in me

*Primus chorus Tenor*  
 De - us De - us me - us res - pi - ce in me

20 *Cantus a 8*  
 De - - - us in no - mi - ne

the printer's point of view.<sup>4</sup> However, there is no denying the fact that, historically, these *sacrae symphoniae* are in direct line of descent from Perotin's motets, and it would be utterly pedantic not to use the expression *motet*.

Viewed from this angle, it is interesting to follow the peregrinations of the motet across the map of Europe, from Southern France to Paris, later to England, back to France and the Netherlands, Italy and, finally, to Germany. Our main concern is of course the point where the motet takes root in Venice, and this occurred after the *procuratori* definitely broke their own rule to employ only Venetians at San Marco, having invited Adrian Willaert to direct its musical establishment. From this time on, our knowledge of the development of the Venetian motet is clear enough. What is less clear is the period immediately preceding it. To be sure, it is not so much to the influence of Netherlands composers in general that the spectacular soaring of the Venetian motet is due, as Leichtentritt claims,<sup>5</sup> as to the extraordinary personality of Willaert, who set such high standards even for his singers that one of them was summarily discharged for refusing to take lessons from him in counterpoint.<sup>6</sup> For even before Willaert, San Marco employed a Netherlander, De Fossis, as the first *maestro di cappella*, in 1491. In the same period, Francesco d'Ana, second organist from 1490 to 1503, composed motets he called *Passio sacra*,<sup>7</sup> but they seem to be, on the ground of Leichtentritt's description,<sup>8</sup> still in 15th-century style - and conservative at that. At any rate, d'Ana established the curious tradition in San Marco following which the organists of that establishment contributed more to the art of composition than the *maestri*, both as to quantity and quality.

No doubt, the period before Willaert displays that mysterious sterility of musical Italy that still puzzles historians. But was the *quattrocento* really as sterile? Is it not rather that large amounts of manuscript music in church archives are still waiting for examination? It has been known all along that Italian libraries are replete with as yet uncatalogued material. In 1949 Walter Rubsamen published a partial list of such manuscripts, and his random notes point to enough material for years of study.<sup>9</sup> The contributors of *Fontes Artis Musicae* collected, more systematically, an immense amount of titles. Here and there, descriptions of individual items appeared, such as those by Lunelli and Garbelotto.<sup>10</sup> While only an infinitesi-

<sup>4</sup> Similarly, in the *Concerti* of 1587, *Sacri di Giove augei* is listed under *Madrigali*, although from the point of view of musical style it is really a motet. The table of contents here should be: *Index musicarum sacrarum* - since there are Mass sections included - and *Index musicarum profanarum*.

<sup>5</sup> *Geschichte der Motette*, Leipzig (1908), 207 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. G. Reese: *Music in the Renaissance*, 370.

<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.*, 165.

<sup>8</sup> Leichtentritt: *op. cit.*, p. 209.

<sup>9</sup> W. Rubsamen: "Music research in Italian libraries; an anecdotal account of obstacles and discoveries," *MLA NOTES*, VI (1949), 220, 543, and VIII (1950), 70.

<sup>10</sup> R. Lunelli: "Un' importante raccolta di musiche per organo di antichi autori italiani e tedeschi," *Musica Sacra*, 81 (1957), 112; A. Garbelotto: "Giordano Pasetto e il suo Cod. D 27 della Capitolare di Padova," *Intermezzi letterario-musicali*, Padova, 1958, 77.