

INTRODUCTION

The Composer and the Music

Pirro Albergati Capacelli played an important part in Bolognese musical life during the last part of the seventeenth century and the first decades of the eighteenth. He was born there on September 20, 1663 to Marcantonio Albergati Capacelli and Vittoria Carpegna, members of the nobility.¹ Details of his education are not known; possibly Perti and Corelli were among his musical instructors. He held positions in the Bolognese government for almost 50 years, yet much of his time seems to have been spent with musical activities: as a concert organizer, a patron of other composers, such as Giovanni Maria Bononcini, and as a composer himself. Reportedly the family *palazzo* was a center of Bolognese musical activity. He also held a position as *maestro di capella* in Puiano in 1728, a year after the death of his wife (who was almost 40 years his junior). He died in the city of his birth on June 22, 1735.

Notwithstanding his extramusical activities and his own sense that he was somewhat of a musical amateur, his compositional output was enormous. He produced at least fifteen numbered publications of vocal and instrumental music plus numerous oratorios, masses, serenades, sacred and secular cantatas. Much of this material is now lost.

The *Suonate a due violini*, Opus 2, from 1683 bears no dedication. Opus 5, the *Pletro armonico* published in 1687, however, was dedicated on August 9 of that year to the emperor Leopold I of Austria and contains a full page engraving of the monarch subduing – presumably – Turkish invaders.

Although the writing in these two collections at times supports Albergati's admission of being a bit of an amateur - overlong, mechanical sequences,² and occasional awkward chordal progressions for instance – there are also passages containing unusual, piquant turns of phrase and harmony, as well as dramatic silences and sudden conclusions. Perhaps one of this music's principal merits is to afford us a view of the musical second tier of the late *seicento*, the soundscape that existed along with the works of the canonic “great names.”

¹ Victor Crowther, *The Oratorio in Bologna (1650-1730)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 14-18 *passim*. Anne Schnoebelen, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 2001) I, 295-6, s.v. "Albergati (Capacelli) Pirro". Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, I (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana. 1960), s.v. "Albergati Capacelli, Pirro," on *Treccani* website: [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/pirro-albergati-capacelli_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/pirro-albergati-capacelli_(Dizionario-Biografico)) (accessed December 12, 2016).

² Gregory Barnett, for instance, considers the second section of the fifth sonata in Opus 2 as “easily the most tedious movement in the entire Bolognese repertory.” Barnett, *Bolognese Instrumental Music, 1660-1710: Spiritual Comfort, Courtly Delight, and Commercial Triumph* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 54. He describes the opening section, however, as music of “inspired pathos.”