

INTRODUCTION

The Composer and the Music

Giovanni Antonio Leoni was born in Padua in 1588 and died in Rome in 1670.¹ A composer and violinist, he was a student of Filippo Nicoletti. When he first performed in Rome in 1617, his playing was described as “incomparable”. A motet *Domine, dominus noster* was published under his name in 1625 in a collection entitled *Sacri Affetti Contesti da diversi eccellentissimi autori*.² He served as a violinist and *maestro di cappella* at the Santa Maria di Loreto dei Fornai alla Colonna Traiana in Rome in 1634. And in 1652, the *Sonate di violino a voce sola di Gio. Antonio Leoni. Libro primo Opera terza*, the only surviving publication devoted to his music, was printed by Vitale Mascardi in Rome and dedicated to his patron Cardinal Giambattista Pallotta.³

Although “sonatas” for one violin and continuo had been published since the early years of the seventeenth century, the Leoni’s collection may have been the first that was entirely devoted to this genre. According to the preface (*A chi legge*) Leoni published it because pieces ascribed to him were being circulated in manuscript and apparently subjected to extensive elaboration and ornamentation, if not wholesale revision. Thus it was a matter of setting the record straight. The print may have been prepared in haste, however. Although it was to have originally contained thirty-two works, only thirty-one pieces are listed in the *tavola*. There are two sonatas labelled “XXX” in the violin partbook, the second one is entitled “Sonata XXXI” in the *partitura* partbook. There is no “Sonata XVIII” in either partbook. Continuo figures are very spare, mostly indicating 4 3 and 6 5 suspensions. The print is generally ordered by “tone” except for the last three works. There are no tempo indications in any of the sonatas. The term *affetti*, more often used in the first decades of the seventeenth century, appears in the first sonata. Leoni occasionally likes to open a piece with trills in the violin part.

Barring is very inconsistent in the print. There are numerous instances of “measures” which vary between four half notes per measure and two half notes per measure. In this edition all measures with C indication are transcribed with two half notes per measure.

¹ Principal sources for Leoni’s life and work include: Günther Morche, “Leoni, Giovanni Antonio,” *MGG II*, vol. 10, p. 1611, Maria Giovanna Fiorentino, “Giovanni Antonio Leoni: nuove acquisizioni biografiche,” *Recercare*, 6 (1994), 193–202, and Carlida Steffan “Leoni, Giovanni Antonio,” *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 64 (2005), online at https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-antonio-leoni_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/. Leoni’s sonatas are discussed in Eleanor McCrickard, “The Roman Repertory for Violin before the Time of Corelli,” *Early Music* 18 no. 4 (1990), 563–80, <https://doi.org/10.1093/earlyj/XVIII.4.563>. Discussion (in Polish) and tabular analyses of Leoni’s sonatas may also be found in Piotr Wilk, *Sonata na skrzypce solo w siedemnastowiecznych Włoszech*, Wrocław, 2005.

² The collection may be downloaded at:

[https://imslp.org/wiki/Sacri_affetti_contesti_da_diversi_eccellentissimi_autori_\(Sammaruco%2C_Francesco\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Sacri_affetti_contesti_da_diversi_eccellentissimi_autori_(Sammaruco%2C_Francesco)).

³ Surviving copies are in Wrocław and Naples. The one in Wrocław lacks the title page for the *partitura* partbook. The citation for the one in Naples on the opac website says “consistenza (consists of) solo [and] partitura”: <https://opac.sbn.it/opacsbn/opac/iccu/scheda.jsp?bid=MUS0244925>. The Wrocław copy may be viewed at: [https://imslp.org/wiki/Sonate_di_Violino%2C_Op.3_\(Leoni%2C_Giovanni_Antonio\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Sonate_di_Violino%2C_Op.3_(Leoni%2C_Giovanni_Antonio))