

Introduction

The Composer and His Music

Innocentio Vivarino was born c. 1575 in Adria in the Veneto region of Northern Italy. He seems to have spent his whole life in his native town, active as organist and music teacher until his death in 1626. From about 1592 he served the Confraternità del SS. Crocefisso, where sacred dramas were performed as fostered by the post-Tridentine Catholic Reformation. In 1602 he was appointed first organist at the cathedral.¹

Of his musical output only two works have survived: a collection of madrigals, *Madrigali concertati a due e tre voci, et a voce con violini, e sinfonie per cantar nel clavicembalo, chitarone o altro simile stromento*, Op. 6 (Venice, 1624); and *Il primo libro de motetti* (Venice, 1620). The latter contains eight sonatas for violin “or a similar instrument”, all of which are included in the present anthology.

Despite their brevity (none of the sonatas is more than 60 whole notes long) and their stereotypical tripartite form comprising duple-, triple-, and duple-meter sections, they attract our attention as being among the first sonatas for solo violin and continuo. Furthermore, they all have a fully integrated continuo bass taking part in contrapuntal and imitative interplay with the violin. Their texture is more like duo sonatas (sonatas *a2*) than solo sonatas. They may have served, together with the solo motets of the collection, as interludes in dramatic performances or as additions or substitutes in the liturgy of the mass and Vespers.² For Vivarino as music teacher they may have also served a pedagogical function.

¹ For the dates of his birth and death and his professional career, see Peter Bilowitzki, *Grove*, s.v. “Vivarino, Innocentio” (accessed March 4, 2016).

² See the dedication: “Hanno Piacciuto tanto queste mie Musiche quando parte di esse in luoco d’Intermedij nelle rappresentationi Spirituali parte per Introiti delle Santissime Messe: e nel principiar de Vesperi: in parte in altre occasioni, quando era bisogno di brevità sono state cantata, e con appropriate Stromenti Concertate ...” (“This music of mine has aroused great delight when it was sung and concerted together with appropriate instruments when brevity was required – sometimes as interludes in spiritual dramas, sometimes as introits in the Holy Mass and at the beginning of Vespers, and sometimes on other occasions ...”).