

INTRODUCTION

The Composer and the Music

Giovanni Battista Riccio was active in Venetian musical life in the second decade of the seventeenth century. The dates of his birth and death are unknown, but in 1609 he was hired as an organist (and mentioned as a violinist) at the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista, and the third and last of his three books of *Divine lodi accomodate per cantar nell'organo. A due voci. Con il suo basso continuo* was published in 1620.¹ The first of these came out in a second edition in 1612², and a second volume appeared in 1614; this is all the music that can be ascribed to Riccio for certain.³

Even if the three books chiefly contain religious vocal music, they also encompass Riccio's instrumental works: no less than twenty canzonas and one sonata, so designated by the composer. Most of the pieces are *a2* with basso continuo, and Riccio asks for a variety of melody instruments in his canzonas: *flautino* (i.e., recorder), *cornetto*, *violino*, *trombone* and *fagotto* (i.e., bassoon).

He seems to have had relations with the influential Venetian patrician family Grimani, especially with the bishop and later patriarch Antonio Grimani, to whom he dedicated his second and third books of *Divine lodi*⁴ and he dedicated individual canzonas to Venetian colleagues such as Giacomo Finetti, Alessandro Grandi, Giovanni Battista Grillo and Giovanni Picchi. He was a composer and musician in Venice at the time of Giovanni Gabrieli, and Gabrieli's influence upon Riccio's canzona-style is obvious. Not only does Riccio use themes from Gabrieli's canzonas, but it has rightly been asserted that Riccio's instrumental *oeuvre* in general can be considered as an attempt to transfer Gabrieli's massive polychoral canzona-style and his echo-technique to the new instrumental genres for small ensembles.⁵

1. The dedication is dated Venice, January 1, 1620. Although the Venetian new year began on March 1, Venetian publishers normally dated their works according to the new, Gregorian calendar with January 1 marking the new year.

2. The first edition is lost.

3. The *Basso per l'organo* of Valerio Bona's *Otto ordini di letanie della Madonna* (Venice, 1619, Sartori I, 1619f), which is the only extant partbook of the work, contains a canzona *in echo* by "Gio. Battista Rizzo".

4. In the dedication to Antonio Grimani in the second book of *Divine lodi* Riccio wrote: "I have received so many favors and such benefits from the most generous hand of my most illustrious Lord, that my obligations to you are infinite [...]" (*tali, e tanti sono i fauori, & i beneficij, c'ho riceuuto dalla liberalissima | mano di V. S. Illustrissima, che infinitamente me le trouo obligato*).

5. See e.g. Peter Allsop, *The Italian 'Trio' Sonata. From its Origins Until Corelli* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 87-8, Eleanor Selfridge-Field, *Venetian Instrumental Music from Gabrieli to Vivaldi*. Third rev. ed. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1994), 110-1, and Frank Heidlberger, *Canzon da sonar. Studien zu Terminologie, Gattungsproblematik und Stilwandel in der Instrumentalmusik Oberitaliens um 1600* (Würzburger musikhistorische Beiträge, Bd. 19) (Tutzing: Verlegt bei Hanz Schneider, 2000), 73-5.