Girolamo Fantini
Eighteen Sonatas for Trumpet and Organ (or Harpsichord)

edited by Irmlraud Krüger
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Fantini – His Life

According to the most recent research by Igino Conforti, Girolamo Fantini was born in 1600 in Spoleto, perhaps on the 11th of February. In April 1631 he entered the service of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Ferdinando II (reigned 1621-1670), as Chief Court Trumpeter ("trombetta maggiore"), receiving a new trumpet made of silver, two banners for the instrument, and a generous monthly salary of 10 scudi (the organist receiving 8 and the chapel-master only 7). On October 1, 1640 a new violin in his possession is mentioned in an inventory. He is last mentioned in the archives in 1675.

His Trumpet Method

Fantini’s reputation rests mainly on the fact that he was the author of one of the first trumpet methods, *Modo per imparare a sonate di tromba*, which he dedicated to the Grand Duke in 1638. It is interesting to note that in the following fiscal year, 1639-40, he received a bonus of 3 scudi; he did not know that this payment was related in any way to the dedication of his method. In any case, the work contains only the usual military signals, as is also the case with Cesare Bendinelli’s method of 1614, but also the first compositions ever written for trumpet and keyboard instruments; Bendinelli’s method contains so-called sonatas for 5 or 10-part trumpet ensemble instead.

The title page, reproduced as a frontispiece, informs us of the contents. Our interpretative translation: “Method for learning to play the trumpet, both in a warlike way and musically – with the organ, with the harpsichord (when muted), and with every other instrument – including many pieces such as balli, brandi, capricci, sarabande, corrents, exercises in passamezzo, and sonatas for trumpet and organ.”

Opening Fantini’s book, the reader is immediately confronted by the author himself, staring out seriously from a woodcut on page 3. His legend states that Fantini comes from Spoleto and that the portrait was done at the age of thirty-six. On his chest Fantini wears a medal with the inscription *FERDINANDUS SECUNDUS IMPERATOR*. The medal was probably a gift from another Ferdinand, the uncle of the Tuscan grand duke, namely Ferdinand II, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (reigned 1619-1637), whose son Ferdinand III (reigned 1637-1657) was crowned as his successor on December 22, 1636 in Regensburg. Whether this medal serves as a clue for a trip by Fantini to Germany, as Karstädt thought, is unsure, since no documentation exists.

In addition, the indication on the bottom of the title page that the Fantini method was published by Daniel "Wunche" (probably a misprint for "Wunche") in Frankfurt has been shown by modern research to be a falsification: there was no printer with that name in Frankfurt, although books were often decorated with the name of that city because of the prestige already enjoyed by that city. In addition, the water marks of the five surviving original copies of the Fantini method are unequivocally Italian.

Contemporary Reports on Fantini’s Playing

Besides its musical contents, the method also contains three poems eulogizing Fantini’s artistry. As was usual in the rhetoric of that time, he is compared with Menesio of antiquity, Hector’s trumpeter during the Trojan Wars. A grain of truth is probably to be found in a passage from the second, anonymous poem: “This one – who with the sound of his beautiful instrument at his will made helmets vibrate, now how he, in a musical ensemble, sweetens her brightest sounds, ladies and knights alike languish with joy! If he consider it then the trumpeter’s chief function had been the soundings during military campaigns, it would have been a great pity for Fantini to take his warlike instrument, playing as he was accompanied only by a harpsichord, to be able to please listeners.

We know of an historical context: Fantini, as a player of the trumpet, accompanied St. Peter’s (1583-1643). Between November 1628 even been involved in the Grand Procession, was even accompanied in the middle of 348 fantini gave who played an organ below the part it was even stated Fantini himself the trumpet. He was present to just these 3.

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1 Conforti, paper written for the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis for a diploma in Baroque trumpet (manuscript), 1967. Conforti’s research in the archives of the State of Florence has brought to light several new and important documents on Fantini’s life which allow us for the first time to give him the correct dates: 1600–1675. Henry Meredith’s piece of busywork (Girolamo Fantini: Trumpet Method: a Practical Edition, 2 vols. [Dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Arts, University of Colorado, Colorado 1984]), to be sure, bears the information of secondary sources together in one place, but it does go beyond the hebreum, some of his continuos realizations and at times exceeds elaborate trumpet ornaments (in the sonatas for trumpet and organ), he was not aware of the meaning of Fantini’s meter, assured slow beat. Concerning the archival research carried out up known to Meredith, see Frederick Hammond, "Musicians at the Court of the Mid-Seventeenth Century", Analecta Musicologica 14 (1978), 410-416. Fantini’s meter is slow beat. Concerning the archival research carried out up known to Meredith, see Frederick Hammond, "Musicians at the Court of the Mid-Seventeenth Century", Analecta Musicologica 14 (1978), 410-416.

2 Conforti, op. cit.

3 Conforti, op. cit.

4 Giorgio Karstädt, "Fantini"

5 The five surviving copies were located in Florence, Munich, and Vienna.
Trumpet in C

18 Sonatas
for Trumpet and Basso Continuo

Prima sonata di Tromba, et Organo insieme detta del Colloredo

Girolamo Fantini
Edited by Irmtraud Krüger

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