

Girolamo Fantini

Eighteen Sonatas for Trumpet and Organ (or Harpsichord)

edited by Irmtraud Krüger
Second Revised Edition 1997

Fantini – His Life

According to the most recent research by Igino Conforzi,¹ 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 viola in his possession is mentioned in an inventory. He is last mentioned in the archives in 1675.²

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 sonare 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 scudi³; we do not know if this payment is related in any way to the dedication of his method. In any case, the work contains not 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 instrument; 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 balletti, brandi, capricci, sarabande, correnti, exercises in passage-work, 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. Its 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 the

medal serves as a clue for a trip by Fantini to Germany, as Karstädt thought,⁴ 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 "Vuastch" (probably a misprint for "Watsch") 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 its fair. In addition, the water marks of the five surviving original copies of the Fantini method are unequivocally Italian.⁵

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 Misenus 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 bellicose instrument at his will made helmets vacillate, ... now how he, in a musical ensemble, sweetening his proudest sounds, ladies and knights alike languish with joy. If we consider that then the trumpet's chief function had been that of sounding during military campaigns, it will have been a great feat for Fantini's to tame his warlike instrument, playing it accompanied only by a harpsichord, he could conquer listeners."

We know of an historical concert performer accompanied, to be sure, was not a harpsichordist, but rather than the illustrious organist of St. Peter's (1583-1643). Between November 1628 and 1629, he had even been employed by the Grand Duke of Tuscany. It will have become acquainted with the method in the middle of 1648. Fantini gave him a copy of the method who played an organ below the organ. The report was even stated in the preface, naming himself to the Grand Duke. He was present at the concert and just these reports.

1 Igino Conforzi, paper written for the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis for a diploma in Baroque trumpet (manuscript), 5-7. Conforzi's research in the Archivio di Stato 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 date 1600-c. 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 Northern Colorado 1984], to be sure, brings the information of secondary sources together in one place, but it does not go beyond this; furthermore, some of his continuo realizations and his at times excessive elaborate trumpet ornaments (in the sonatas for trumpet and organ) show he was not aware of the meaning of Fantini's basic meter, assuming a slow basic beat. Concerning the archival research carried out up to now known to Meredith, see Frederick Hammond, "Musicians at the Court in the Mid-Seventeenth Century", *Analecta Musicologica* 14 (1971), 1-17. "Musical Instruments at the Medici Court in the Mid-Seventeenth Century", *Analecta Musicologica* 15 (1975), 202-219. Conforzi's research has not yet been published. See "Girolamo Fantini, 'monarch of the trumpet': additions to his biography", *Historic Brass Society Journal* 10 (1988), 1-10 and "Girolamo Fantini, 'monarch of the trumpet'", *Historic Brass Society Journal* 6 (1994), 32-60.

2 Conforzi, 18-19. In this archival document Fantini is in a state of abject poverty. Sic transit gloria mundi. Fantini's life had been known only through the court records are alluded to by Conforzi, 16).

3 Conforzi, op. cit.

4 Georg Karstädt, "Fantini"

5 The five surviving copies of the Fantini method are now located in Florence (Biblioteca Mediceo-Musicale). V.

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Trumpet

18 Sonatas

for Trumpet and Basso Continuo

Girolamo Fantini

Edited by Imtraud Krüger

Prima sonata di Tromba, et Organo insieme detta del Colloredo

Decorated Example

Original

Decorated Example and Original musical notation for the first system of the first sonata.

Musical notation for the second system of the first sonata.

Musical notation for the third system of the first sonata.

Musical notation for the fourth system of the first sonata.

Musical notation for the fifth system of the first sonata.

Musical notation for the sixth system of the first sonata.

Musical notation for the seventh system of the first sonata.

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Sonata [No.2], detta del Gonzaga

Musical notation for the first system of the second sonata.

Musical notation for the second system of the second sonata.

Musical notation for the third system of the second sonata.

Musical notation for the fourth system of the second sonata.

Musical notation for the fifth system of the second sonata.

Musical notation for the sixth system of the second sonata.

Musical notation for the seventh system of the second sonata.

Musical notation for the eighth system of the second sonata.

Sonata [No.3], detta del Niccolini

Musical notation for the first system of the third sonata.

Musical notation for the second system of the third sonata.

Musical notation for the third system of the third sonata.

Musical notation for the fourth system of the third sonata.

Musical notation for the fifth system of the third sonata.

Musical notation for the sixth system of the third sonata.

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Trumpet in C

18 Sonatas for Trumpet and Basso Continuo

Prima sonata di Tromba, et Organo insieme detta del Colloredo

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Trumpet

Basso

Musical notation for measures 1-6. The Trumpet part (top staff) begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. It features a melodic line with a trill (tr) and a sharp sign (#) in measure 5. The Basso Continuo part (bottom staff) starts with a bass clef and a common time signature, providing a harmonic accompaniment. A sharp sign (#) is present in measure 5 of the Basso part.

Musical notation for measures 7-11. The Trumpet part continues with a series of sixteenth-note runs. The Basso Continuo part provides a steady accompaniment. A bracketed sharp sign (#) is located in measure 10 of the Basso part.

Musical notation for measures 12-16. The Trumpet part features a melodic line with eighth-note patterns. The Basso Continuo part continues with a simple accompaniment.

Musical notation for measures 17-21. The Trumpet part includes a trill (tr) and a sharp sign (#) in measure 17. The Basso Continuo part has a sharp sign (#) in measure 19.

Musical notation for measures 22-26. The Trumpet part features a trill (tr) and a sharp sign (#) in measure 22. The Basso Continuo part has a sharp sign (#) in measure 24.

Musical notation for measures 27-30. The Trumpet part continues with a melodic line. The Basso Continuo part provides accompaniment.

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