

Introduction

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The present publication documents a conference held in Bologna in October 2023, organised by the Museo San Colombano – Tagliavini Collection and the Conservatorio di Musica Giovan Battista Martini in collaboration with the Museo Internazionale e Biblioteca della Musica Bologna and the mdw – University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna. This was not the first conference dedicated to the harpsichord and its music from c. 1500 to 1600 organised by the editors of the present volume. Two years earlier, a symposium entitled ‘*Universum rei harmonicae concentum absolvunt*’: *The Harpsichord in the Sixteenth Century*,¹ was held, which, as was to be expected, proved that the topic was not only fruitful but also far from exhausted. This, in turn, motivated the organisation of a follow-up event.

Both symposia and, consequently, both publications shared several common ideas and goals. The starting point is the well-known fact that the 16th century was a period, which saw a considerable increase in the significance of keyboard instruments in general, and the harpsichord in particular. Just to recall the most important aspects of this process:² Stringed keyboard instruments spread throughout Europe and sometimes even beyond; this was accompanied by a regional diversification, not least in harpsichord building; keyboard instruments took on multiple musical and cultural functions, as they were now played both by professionals and amateurs and both as solo instruments as well as in various ensembles; they were used for improvising as well as for performing written music, be it pieces originally conceived for keyboard, or intabulations of various kinds of ensemble music; and finally the 16th century is marked by the emergence of the first substantial body of notated keyboard music.

1 Its results have meanwhile been made available in an online-publication: ‘*Universum rei harmonicae concentum absolvunt*’: *The Harpsichord in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Augusta Campagne and Markus Grassl (Vienna, 2024), <<https://www.mdw.ac.at/mdwpress/books-harpsichord/>>.

2 Cf. in more detail: ‘Introduction’, in: *ibid.*, 3–4.

These few keywords alone indicate the breadth and the diversity of issues that the study of the harpsichord in the 16th century must address, ranging from the cultural role of keyboard instruments and keyboard playing to social history, organology, notation, repertoire and manifold aspects of performance practice. Furthermore, because of the close connection between the harpsichord and other keyboard instruments, questions concerning the harpsichord are often intimately related to keyboard culture, music and playing in general.

Of course, many of the relevant topics have already been addressed by scholars and performers, whose interest in stringed keyboard instruments from 1500 to 1600 has grown considerably in recent decades. On the other hand, as mentioned above, it is indisputable, that the subject is far from being fully explored. Not only are numerous research questions still unresolved. Moreover, new questions and lines of research have emerged, not least in correspondence with current developments in musicology, which have been stimulated by fields of research such as cultural studies, global history or gender studies. As for today's musical practice, it can be observed that, despite all recent endeavours, the keyboard music of the 16th century still appears to be somewhat overshadowed by later music. Even today it is sometimes regarded not as significant in its own right, but just as a mere prelude to the richness of Baroque keyboard music. This becomes manifest, for example, in the fact, that 16th-century keyboard music typically plays a minor role in the harpsichord and organ curricula of universities and conservatories. Similarly, its performance is often approached both aesthetically and technically from a perspective shaped by experience of the 17th and 18th century repertoires.

Thus, although the Vienna and the Bologna events shared several characteristics, they differed in one important respect: Whereas the Vienna conference addressed the topic in a general way, being open to papers on the harpsichord in the 16th century without any limitation in terms of thematic aspect or region, the conference in Bologna aimed to delve more specifically into a sub-area by focusing on Italy. Given the richness of the Italian keyboard culture of the Cinquecento and its impact on other European countries, this focus allowed both the discussion of aspects of more general significance and the raising of a wider spectrum of diverse issues. Accordingly, the papers dealt with questions of notation,³ of music theory in relation to historically informed pedagogy and performance practice,⁴ and with the reception of Italian keyboard instruments and Italian keyboard culture in other European regions.⁵ The subject of harpsichord building was addressed both in terms of music theory and

3 See the chapters by Ian Pritchard and Augusta Campagne.

4 See the chapter by Edoardo Bellotti.

5 See the chapters by Darryl Martin and Markus Grassl.

musical practice⁶ and in terms of a specific local school.⁷ On the basis of iconographic sources, two papers studied keyboard playing as a means of constructing (female) identity⁸ and the phenomenon of harpsichord decoration.⁹

As with the symposium in Vienna, one of the basic ideas of the Bologna conference was to provide a forum for exchange of experiences and insights from diverse perspectives, bringing together participants from different fields – musicologists, scholar-performers, performers and specialist in instrument building and restauration. Accordingly, the event again combined different formats – papers, lecture-recitals and masterclasses for students.¹⁰ The lecture-recitals and masterclasses in particular benefited from the fact, that the Museo San Colombano – Tagliavini Collection, one of the richest and most eminent collections of early Italian keyboard instruments in the world, served as the main venue for the event.

The present publication is structured according to the two types of contributions to the conference: Part One includes (the majority of) the scholarly papers, while Part Two consists of presentations which reflect the lecture-recitals given by scholar-performers and performers. All contributions have been revised and partially expanded by the authors for the printed version. In order to convey the content of the lecture-recitals as fully as possible, the respective chapters in this publication also include video or audio recordings of the works or groups of works that were the subject of the lecture-recitals. The publication further incorporates two papers which were not part of the Bologna conference: Augusta Campagne's article on notation conventions in 16th century keyboard music prints, which follows up an issue raised by Ian Pritchard at the previous conference, and Heidelinde Pollerus' study on harpsichord decoration. The latter is based on a paper presented at the 2021 Vienna Symposium, which, for several reasons, could not be published in the corresponding conference report.

It goes without saying, that a project like this would not have been possible without the support and participation of numerous institutions and individuals. We are very grateful to Catalina Vicens (Museo San Colombano – Tagliavini Collection) and Maria Luisa Baldassari (Conservatorio di Musica Giovan Battista Martini) for all their efforts in organising the event and in particular for the opportunity to hold the conference at their respective institutions. We would also like to thank the members of the Scientific Committee, Mario Aschauer, Frances Fitch, Massimiliano Guido, Francis Knights and Joel Speerstra, who advised on the planning of the symposium and who were responsible for selecting the proposals submitted in response to the call for papers. Our

6 See the chapter by Martin Kirnbauer.

7 See the chapter by Francesco Nocerino.

8 See the chapter by Jane Hatter.

9 See the chapter by Heidelinde Pollerus.

10 See the programme in the appendix to this volume.

specials thanks go to the students coming from Austria, Belgium, Italy, Latvia, Taiwan and the United States, whose participation made the workshops a success. Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to our partner institutions in Bologna and to the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna for bearing the costs of the conference and of this publication, and to all those who have helped us to produce this volume: Chris Roth, Candace Smith, Gwendolyn Toth, Hugh Ward-Perkins, and Philippe Canguilhem for translating and editing the articles written by non-native speakers, and the board and staff of mdwPress, in particular Max Bergmann, Christian Keitel and Lisi Scheit, for their cooperation in the publishing process.

In the final phase of preparing this volume, we received the deeply saddening news of the passing of Edoardo Bellotti. We are profoundly grateful and honoured that, despite his serious illness, Edoardo was able to share his paper with us. We dedicate this book to his memory, in recognition of the immense contribution he made to the community of scholars and performers of early keyboard music.

Markus Grassl / Augusta Campagne

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