

Preface

Giovanni Battista Vitali (1632-1692) was born into a musical family and lived in Bologna and Modena as a composer, a cellist, and a singer. He was renowned in his time particularly for his instrumental compositions and appears to have influenced such contemporaries as Corelli, Torelli und Purcell. He is also considered to be the founder of the baroque sonata, particularly the triosonata.

Vitali's Opus 5 belongs to his earlier works which follow the structure of the *sonata da chiesa*, a form rich in rhythmic and thematic ideas that developed out of the monothematic canzona. The original title reads "Sonate a due, trè, quattro, e cinque stromenti di Gio. Battista Vitali"¹. Our edition is based on the print of 1669, a microfilm of which was provided to us by the **Civico Museo Bibliografico in Bologna**. It includes 5 part-books: Violino Primo (treble clef), Violino Secondo (treble clef), Alto Viola (alto clef) and Tenore Viola (tenor clef), Violone (bass clef), Organo (mainly bass clef, figured). The collection contains 12 sonatas: 5 two-part, 4 three-part, 2 four-part and 1 five-part, each with basso continuo.

The titles of the sonatas, for example "La Scalabrina", are to be understood as dedications to public figures of the time. However, a musical characterization of these personages, as was sometimes the case in the works of later composers (Forquerey for instance), was not intended.

Our edition reproduces three of the twelve sonatas: G059 contains the two four-part sonatas "La Safatelli" and "Capriccio detto il Molza", G060 the five-part sonata "La Scalabrina". Although these pieces were written with the violin family in mind, that is for 2 violins, viola(s), and cello, they can easily be played by a viol consort since the violin parts seldom go above a". Furthermore, it is known that the viol family existed alongside the violin family at that time in Italy – see, for example, the two sonatas "à quattro viole di gamba" by G. Legrenzi, published in Venice in 1673². Vitali's sonatas also lend themselves very well to performance by winds or mixed ensembles³. For this reason we have labeled the voices neutrally as "Diskant 1", "Diskant 2", "Alt", "Tenor", and "Bass".

It was a convention of the time that an organ or other continuo instrument should support the stringed instruments. Our score is arranged with this in mind and includes the figures in the organo part. Should no continuo instrument be available, the bass player can play the continuo notes when his own part has rests, as long as the missing notes are not doubling another voice. We have arranged the bass part with this possibility in mind.

Our edition holds as closely as possible to the carefully executed original. The few inconsistencies found were corrected and marked as such. Names of movements, meters, note values, bar lines, and fermatas are original, as are the repeat indications in the Capriccio. The figures in the continuo part have not been altered.

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¹ See also the reproduction of the title page to the Violino Primo, in which Vitali labels the instrument that we now call Cello „Violone da Brazzo“.

² Giovanni Legrenzi, La Cetra, Sonata Quinta and Sonata Sesta, Edition Güntersberg 2003, G025 und G026

³ See also the edition of La Scalabrina arranged for recorders by C. Dolmetsch, Universal Edition 1970