

# MICHAEL TALBOT

MARTINO BITTI'S TWENTY-FOUR SONATAS

FOR VIOLIN AND BASSO CONTINUO:

AN INTRODUCTION

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Musicology has the capacity to harm the reputation of composers in two ways. The first is by outright disparagement, the second by silence. The violinist-composer Martino Bitti has unjustly suffered both misfortunes. John Walter Hill's brief article in the 1980 *New Grove*, retained in the revised edition of 2001, ends with the damning sentence: 'His surviving music shows that he was a composer of modest talent and limited imagination',<sup>1</sup> while the corresponding entry by Giancarlo Rostirolla in the most recent edition of *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* repeats Hill's verdict in a sentence that reads like a simple translation: 'Die überlieferten Werke zeigen Bitti als einen Komponisten von mässiger Talent und begrenzter Vorstellungskraft'.<sup>2</sup> For their part, William S. Newman's wide-ranging study of the Baroque sonata and Willi Apel's survey of Italian seventeenth-century string music pass over Bitti without a word, thereby implying the truth of what Hill and Rostirolla stated.<sup>3</sup>

This over-quick dismissal of Bitti as a composer stands in sharp contrast to both the judgement of his contemporaries and the experience of his nine known sonatas for wind instruments (recorder and oboe) by modern performers, both of which have been highly positive. Indeed, Charles Burney was moved to write, after commenting that the Italians cultivated wind instruments less than the Germans: 'And yet, during the present century, Martinelli Bitti, Giuseppe San Martini, and the two Bezozzis, brought the oboe and the bassoon to very great perfection'.<sup>4</sup> If Burney believed, incorrectly, that Bitti was a wind player, this can only be because his sonatas for wind instruments are so expertly written, as their many modern editions attest. Ironically, however, Bitti's almost as numerous surviving compositions for his own instrument (twenty-four solo sonatas, one trio sonata and one concerto) have been out of circulation since the middle of the eighteenth century. Their publication in the present series is at once an act of restitution, a continuation of the publication of his instrumental music in modern editions and, most important, an invitation to study and play music that is inventive, satisfying and even, in certain respects, of some historical significance.<sup>5</sup>

## BITTI'S LIFE

Martino (often affectionately styled Martinello or Martinetto) Bitti is one of those virtuosos of the violin who resisted the urge to travel and amaze distant audiences, preferring to consolidate his position in his adopted home, Florence.<sup>6</sup> Librettos of his vocal works inform us that he was born in the republic of Genoa (through his description as 'genovese'), and the information that he was aged 87 at the time of his death in Florence on 2 February 1743 (Modern Style) places his birth in either 1655 or 1656, thus equidistantly between the birth dates of Corelli (1653) and Torelli (1658).<sup>7</sup> From Genoese sources there is so far no confirmation of his birth or firm information on his family and early life.

1 John Walter Hill, 'Bitti, Martino', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London, Macmillan, 1980), vol. 2, 747–48. The article is retained for the second edition of 2001 (vol. 3, 638).

2 Giancarlo Rostirolla, 'Bitti, Martino, Martinello', in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Personenteil, vol. 2 (Kassel etc., Bärenreiter, 1999), 1696–97.

3 William S. Newman, *The Sonata in the Baroque Era* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press), 1959; Willi Apel, *Die italienische Violinmusik im 17. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1983).

4 Charles Burney, *A General History of Music From the Earliest Ages to the Present Period* (London, Becket and others, 1776–89), vol. 3, 532.

5 See the author's article 'Martino Bitti's Violin Sonatas', *The Consort*, lxviii (2012), 26–52, which contains many additional details, especially regarding style and compositional technique. Note, however, that that the time that article was published the twelve Cambridge sonatas had not come to my knowledge, and the manuscript in the British Library with six new sonatas became known too late to be discussed, except very briefly in a closing paragraph.

6 Nearly all reports of Bitti's activity as a violinist place him within the borders of Tuscany, but it is known that in 1730 he participated, together with a violinist son, in the opera at neighbouring Lucca. See Luigi Nerici, *Storia della musica in Lucca* (Lucca, Tipografia Giusti, 1879), 339.

7 The fullest available account of Bitti's life is Warren Kirkendale, *The Court Musicians of Florence during the Principate of the Medici* (Florence, Olschki, 1993), 432–37.

Antonio Veracini (1659–1733) and Giovanni Battista Vivaldi (c.1655–1736) have been proposed, both very implausibly, as teachers of Bitti. A much more likely candidate is Carlo Mannelli (1640–97), the leading Roman violinist in the period immediately before Corelli. Mannelli bequeathed to Bitti a manuscript treatise on violin playing in his will of 1693.<sup>8</sup> This evidence of a close personal connection, together with certain prominent stylistic features in Bitti's sonatas (such as the presence of fugal movements entitled *Canzona*) linking him to the Roman school c.1660, as represented by Mannelli and Lelio Colista (1629–80), suggests that the former taught Bitti at some stage and provides an explanation for the strong presence in his music of traits inherited from the Roman tradition.

Bitti joined the Tuscan court orchestra in 1685, rising rapidly to become its 'primo violino' (concertmaster). Over the years, he consolidated his position in Florence as orchestral leader, teacher and — less conspicuously, but far from negligibly — composer. Bitti was a favourite of Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici, the music-loving heir apparent to the Grand Duchy whose premature death in 1713 put paid to his hopes of succeeding his father, Cosimo III. The posthumously compiled inventory of Ferdinando's property (9 November 1713) lists an engraved portrait of Bitti 'con violino e arco in mano' ('with violin and bow in hand'),<sup>9</sup> which is perhaps a reflection of the high esteem in which he was held. Bitti retained his position at the head of the court instrumentalists until his retirement in 1726, when he was succeeded by Giuseppe Maria Fanfani. He continued to draw his salary and retained his title until his death.

We know that he gave tuition in Florence to gentlemen on the Grand Tour, as recorded in the diary of a nobleman from the Southern Netherlands, Corneille-Jean-Marie van den Branden, Seigneur de Reeth (1690–1761), who reported taking nine lessons with 'sieur Martinetti' in Florence in late 1713 on his way to Venice.<sup>10</sup> The young German musician Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel visited him around the same time.<sup>11</sup> A more significant encounter occurred in early 1717, when the leading German violinist Johann Georg Pisendel (1687–1755) passed through Florence on his way back to Venice from Rome. Pisendel took advantage of his extended visit to Italy to collect music. He persuaded some composers to donate or sell works to him or permit him to make his own copies, and he also purchased many other works from copying shops. After his death, the court bought Pisendel's collection from his estate, and it is preserved almost intact, united with the music of the *Hofkapelle*, in the Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden (SLUB). Six works by Bitti survive today among Pisendel's manuscripts: Italian copies of four violin sonatas (nos. 3–6 in the present volume), a German copy of a trio sonata in separate parts and the autograph score of a violin concerto.<sup>12</sup>

## EARLY VOCAL WORKS

In the first years of his career, Bitti was fairly active as a composer of vocal music. In 1693 he produced an oratorio (*S. Agata*, revived in 1696) and a serenata for Ferdinando's birthday (*L'Accademia festeggiante nel giorno natalizio del serenissimo principe Ferdinando di Toscana*); in 1698, two acts of an opera (*Anacreonte*); in 1700, one act of an opera (*Lucio Vero*). In addition, he composed motets and other sacred works, plus individual movements for the multi-authored oratorios (*oratori-centone*) that were a distinctive feature of the Florentine scene. A lone chamber cantata, *Silvia nella partenza d'Erinto* (textual incipit: 'Correa l'infausto giorno'), survives in Bologna.<sup>13</sup> After Ferdinando's death Bitti's production of vocal music tailed off sharply, and it was perhaps mainly at the behest of the prince that he cultivated the vocal genre.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 432–33.

<sup>9</sup> Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, GM 1222, f. 97. The inventory is transcribed in Alessandra Baroni, *I Medici e l'incisione: Le origini della collezione di stampe degli Uffizi*, doctoral thesis (University of Utrecht, 2008), 186–87.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Talbot, *The Vivaldi Compendium*, (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2011), 36.

<sup>11</sup> Johann Adam Hiller, *Lebensbeschreibungen berühmter Musikgelehrten und Tonkünstler neuerer Zeit Leipzig*, Dykische Buchhandlung, 1784), 189.

<sup>12</sup> The shelfmarks of the violin sonatas are Mus. 2362-R-1, 2, 3 and Mus. 2-R-8,54; that of the trio sonata is Mus. 2362-Q-1; that of the concerto is Mus. 2362-O-5 (formerly Mus. 2-O-1,68).

<sup>13</sup> Museo Internazionale e Biblioteca della Musica di Bologna, DD.50, ff. 79–100. This cantata is glowingly described in Remo Giazotto, *La musica a Genova nella vita pubblica e privata dal XIII al XVIII secolo* (Genoa, Società industrie e lavorazioni affini, 1951), 254, as 'uno stupendo componimento, perfettamente compiuto e di dimensioni invero eccezionali per l'epoca in cui fu scritto' ('a stupendous composition, perfectly fashioned and of truly exceptional dimensions for the period when it was written').

## THE PUBLISHED LONDON SONATAS

That Bitti's violin sonatas were beginning to become known and valued in the British Isles before 1700 is shown by a letter of 6 April 1698 from the Scottish priest Fr Alexander (known as 'Cosimo') Clerk in Livorno to his relative, the famous Scottish nobleman and amateur musician Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, then visiting Rome, in which Cosimo promises to send him 'the violin with the musike off martino I left att florence'.<sup>14</sup> Among the earliest known instrumental compositions by Bitti, and the earliest to appear in print, are two violin sonatas that appeared in a periodical publication issued by John Walsh and his associate Joseph Hare in twelve monthly instalments during the year 1704. Walsh's purpose was evidently to capitalize on the newly won popularity of Italian and Italianate compositions for strings, which were then receiving frequent performances at London concerts from immigrant and native musicians alike.

Walsh's formula was simple. In the first half of 1704 he brought out each month two works, collectively described as 'The Music for January (etc.)', which comprised a trio sonata in separate parts and a solo sonata in score. Publication was usually announced at the end of the respective month (or the start of the next) in an advertisement placed in the *Post Man*. In the period January-June 1704 the trios were by Torelli, Purcell (the *Golden Sonata*), Bassani, Corelli,<sup>15</sup> Albinoni and Pez, the partnering solos being by Bitti, Matteis, Corelli, Bitti (again), Lonati and Pepusch. In the second half of the year the formula was widened to include, as first item, some 'multivoice' sonatas and even a concerto from Albinoni's op. 2, for which purpose Walsh raided recent publications of his Amsterdam colleague Estienne Roger.

The style of engraving adopted by Walsh for these works was fairly crude. For example, the dots for repeat signs were omitted, as were such niceties as trills. The title of the particular instalment was impressed with a stamp on the first page. That for January runs:

Sonata in a# for VIOLINS | in 3 parts by Torelli perform'd by Sig.<sup>r</sup> Gasperini and M.<sup>r</sup> Dean at ye Theatre | with a VIOLIN SOLO in a# Publish'd for | Jan.<sup>r</sup> price 1s-6d to be Continu'd Monthly | with y.<sup>e</sup> Choisest SONATAS and SOLOS by | the Greatest Masters in Europe for y<sup>e</sup> Year | 1704.<sup>16</sup>

It is noticeable that Bitti's name does not appear in connection with the solo, from which fact one could easily infer that the composer of the trio, Torelli, was its author (this omission had consequences, as we will see later). 'Signor Gasperini' was the Cremonese noble amateur violinist and composer Gasparo Visconti, who was a leading musical figure during his five-year sojourn in the capital (1702–1706).<sup>17</sup> 'Mr Dean' was probably the elder Thomas Dean (or Deane). The 'Theatre' was Drury Lane.

In the publication announcement, which appeared in the *Post Man* for 22–25 January 1704, Bitti's name is added:

This day is publish'd, That famous Sonata in Alaremi for 2 Violins and a Through Bass, by Signior Torrelli, perform'd by Signior Gasperini and Mr Dean at the Theatre, as also a new Solo, by Signior Martino for a Violin and a Bass, perform'd by Signior Gasperini, both Publish'd for Jan. price 1s.6d. Which will be continued monthly with the best and choicest Sonata's and Solo's by the Greatest Masters in Europe for the year 1704 [...]<sup>18</sup>

In April 1704 a second Bitti sonata, likewise in A major, was published in the series. This partnered Corelli's trumpet sonata. The title page, oddly ignoring the trumpet part, describes the instalment as 'SONATA in D# for VIOLINS in 3 Parts by Arcangelo | Corelli As also a

<sup>14</sup> National Records of Scotland, GD18/5202/21. I am grateful to Andrew Woolley for this reference.

<sup>15</sup> The Corelli composition had an additional part for trumpet, being the well-known Trumpet Sonata whose authenticity is not yet universally accepted.

<sup>16</sup> Transcribed from the example of the Torelli trio sonata in the Bridge Collection of the Jerwood Library of the Performing Arts, Trinity College of Music, London (no shelfmark).

<sup>17</sup> The English public of the time made a habit of referring to immigrant or visiting Italian musicians by their Christian names, often in diminutive form. Thus 'Signor' (often spelt 'Signior') Gasperini' for Gasparo Visconti, 'Signor Claudio' for Claudio Rogier, 'Signor Nicolini' for Nicola Grimaldi, etc. On Visconti's career and music, see Gabriele Gamba, 'I concerti per violino di Gasparo Visconti', *Studi vivaldiani*, v (2005), 23–44.

<sup>18</sup> The publication is listed as no.143 in William C. Smith, *A Bibliography of the Musical Works Published by John Walsh during the Years 1695–1720*, 2nd edn (London, The Bibliographical Society, 1968), 46.

SOLO for a VIOLIN by Sig.r Martini Betti | Neither of them before Printed';<sup>19</sup> the advertisement in the *Post Man* for 27–29 April spoke of 'A Sonata for two Violins and a thorough Bass with a Trumpet part by Arcangelo Corelli, as also a new Solo for a Violin and a Bass by Martino Betty [*sic*], neither of them before printed'.<sup>20</sup>

In 1706 and 1707 Walsh reissued first the solos for January to June and then the corresponding trios (under the title *Harmonia Mundi*, and with a trio by Pepusch from the November 1704 instalment replacing the Corelli trumpet sonata) as sets of six similarly scored pieces. The solos were advertised in the *Daily Courant* for 23 November 1706 as:

Six Select Solos for a Violin and a thorough Bass. Collected out of the Choicest Works of Six Eminent Masters, viz. Signior Martino Betty, Mr. Nicola [Matteis] Jun. Signior Corelli, Signior Torelli, Signior Carlo Ambrogio [Lonati], and Mr. Pepusch; the first Collection Engraven and carefully Corrected, price 3s.<sup>21</sup>

The significance of the phrase 'the first Collection' is that Walsh planned to bring out a complementary collection comprising the solos that had appeared in the second half of 1704. There is some fragmentary evidence that he did so. A keen eye will have spotted the presence of a Torelli sonata among the six listed. A violin sonata by Torelli was indeed included in the 1704 periodical publication — but not until December. What appears to have happened is that in the preparation of the advertisement Torelli was mistaken for the composer of the first solo, perhaps on the basis of the instalment's original stamped title (see above).

Durham Cathedral Library possesses this collection, the contents of which are today preserved, partly in transposed order, in a volume shelfmarked C30.<sup>22</sup> Each sonata occupies precisely four pages in upright folio format, which are numbered consecutively from 1 to 24.<sup>23</sup> Each sonata is preceded by a stamped title possibly created especially for their issue as a set. The text for Bitti's 'January' sonata runs:

VIOLINO SOLO a# | del Martino Betti | Perform'd by Sig.r Gasperini | at the THEATER ROYALL | The SOLO Proper for the Harpsicord or Spinnet<sup>24</sup>

The title for the 'April' sonata was more succinct, reading merely: 'A SOLO in A# for a VIOLIN by Sig.r Martino Betti | The Solo Proper for the Harpsicord or Spinnet'.<sup>25</sup>

Regarding the closing phrase of the titles, it was absolutely normal at the time, especially in Britain, to appropriate music for violin and bass for the keyboard, assigning the two original parts to the right and left hands of the player, usually without the addition of extra harmonies.

The anthology for violin and figured bass entitled *Medulla Musicae* issued by the London publisher John Cluer around 1727 includes the corrente-like second movement of the 'January' sonata and its final movement headed 'Giga'. The musical text for both movements is presumably taken from the Walsh edition. Torelli is named both times as the author, probably through a misinterpretation of the 1704 title page.<sup>26</sup>

## THE MANUSCRIPT LONDON SONATAS

But the two published sonatas represent only a minority of the violin sonatas by Bitti circulating in Britain, and particularly in London, in the first decade or so of the eighteenth century. I owe it to a chance remark by Peter Holman (whose kindness I acknowledge here) that I learned of an early eighteenth-century manuscript collection of violin sonatas in the British Library, Add. ms. 31466, containing seven sonatas by a composer named 'Martino'

19 Transcribed from the example in the Bridge Collection.

20 No.150 in Smith, *Bibliography*, 48.      21 No. 224 in Smith, *Bibliography*, 71.

22 For details, see R. Alec Harman, *A Catalogue of the Printed Music and Books on Music in Durham Cathedral Library* (London, Oxford University Press, 1968), *passim*.

23 The same volume contains a sonata by Dean (for November 1704) and the mentioned sonata by Torelli (for December 1704) on pages numbered 5–7 and 8–10 respectively. Presumably, these are remnants of the second collection, which does not appear to have been advertised.

24 Transcribed from the example in Durham Cathedral Library, C30(xi).

25 Durham Cathedral Library, C30(viii).

26 The two movements are listed, ostensibly as the products of Torelli's pen, in Francesco Passadore, *Catalogo tematico delle composizioni di Giuseppe Torelli (1658–1709)* (Padua, Edizioni de 'I Solisti Veneti', 2007), 17–18 and 20–21, where further bibliographical details can be found.

whom the RISM online catalogue took to be Giuseppe San Martino, but who could be identified securely as Martino Bitti on the basis of several indices, the most decisive of which was that one sonata in the group was identical with the first of the two sonatas published by Walsh.<sup>27</sup> The manuscript was purchased by the British Museum (today, the British Library) from the famous collector of musical manuscripts Julian Marshall (1836–1903), together with over 400 further items, between 1880 and 1881. Before that time, as one notes from a bookplate on the *verso* of an endpaper at the front of the volume, it belonged to another well-known collector and amateur musician, James Mathias (1709/10–1782). Mathias, a London merchant trading with Hamburg and Russia, was a well-respected amateur singer (a bass) famous for the glee parties held at his home in Warnford Court, Throgmorton Street.<sup>28</sup> The ownership of the manuscript between Mathias and Marshall and before Mathias is not known. Over time, the manuscript has suffered considerable deterioration, with much confusing show-through of musical text and some tearing that even after repair has resulted in the loss or displacement of a certain amount of musical material. When the volume was rebound in 1972, the folios were individually enclosed in transparent plastic to prevent further damage.

The sixty-six sonatas by various authors in two-stave score for violin and bass making up the main part of the manuscript occupy the eighty folios running from f. 2v to f. 81r.<sup>29</sup> To these has been added at some later stage (perhaps during Mathias's ownership) an unrelated bifolio, ff. 82–83, containing an engraved sonata for recorder and bass by William Williams. The format is upright, measuring approximately 36.5 by 26.5 cm, and each page of the manuscript contains eighteen pre-ruled staves, accommodating nine systems. The sonatas are numbered in sequence from 1 to 66: Arabic numerals are used for nos. 1–4 and Roman numerals for the remainder. When provided, the names of the composers are written neatly over the opening bar of the first system.

A title page for the collection, on f. 1r, has been added later. It reads: 'Sixty Six | *Solo's or Sonata's* | FOR | A Violin and a Base Viol or Harpsichord. | Composed | BY | Several Eminent Masters'. The lettering deliberately reproduces the florid style of engravers, and the use of so-called 'Gothic' letters for the single word 'Composed' dates this title page to a later point in the eighteenth century: perhaps in its second half. Note the characteristically English term 'Base Viol', which in that century was widely (and for us today, confusingly) used both for a six-stringed viola da gamba and a four-stringed bass violin or violoncello.<sup>30</sup>

Complementing the title page is an index of the sonatas, on f. 84v, in similar handwriting. The sonatas, identified by their serial number and composer (where given), are listed in ascending order of key, from A minor to G major, and the number '67' is added for the appended recorder sonata.

The collation of the manuscript is difficult to establish, but some clues are provided by an incomplete series of gathering letters, starting at 'A' and rising to 'O' (a few supplementary indications, such as 'M<sub>2</sub>' and 'M<sub>3</sub>', refer to interior pages within gatherings) written centrally at the bottom of several *recto* sides. From these, it appears that individual gatherings contain varying numbers of bifolios, but generally two or three.

What is certain, however, is that the sequence in which the sonatas were entered into the volume corresponds exactly to that of the gatherings and of the modern foliation. This is because, in order to minimize page-turns, all the sonatas begin on a *verso* side. Most conclude on the facing *recto*, but a few longer sonatas continue on to a second *verso* and *recto*, the copyist warning the user that the sonata remains the same with the inscription 'p.<sup>1</sup> 2.<sup>2</sup>' ('part [the] second'). Exceptionally, the final sonata occupies three pages (ff. 80v–81v). Thus all the sonatas occupy, in whole or part, two or three consecutive folios, sometimes straddling

<sup>27</sup> The online catalogue of the British Library gives the correct composer identification, however.

<sup>28</sup> A description of such a glee party held towards the end of Mathias's life is given in *The Literary Gazette and Journal for the Year 1824* (London, Bensley, 1824), 32. It was to Mathias that Geminiani in 1761 donated his score of *The Incharnted Forest* before returning from London to Dublin.

<sup>29</sup> The foliation is not original.

<sup>30</sup> Given the early date of the manuscript, it is more likely that a viola da gamba was intended. It is perhaps significant that the bass part nowhere descends below D, lowest note of the normally tuned bass viol. Naturally, this observation does not reduce the likelihood that in many instances, particularly those concerning Italian composers such as Bitti, the cello was the instrument for which the bass line was originally conceived.

different gatherings. In these circumstances it would have been impossible to transpose gatherings and folios once the music had been copied. The care taken over page turns, as a result of which numerous *recto* sides were left blank, suggests that despite the unusually large size of the manuscript, it was intended for active use in performance rather merely to gratify a collector.

Two hands, both evidently British, wrote out the music. One hand (we will call it  $\alpha$ ) was clearly dominant, while the other ( $\beta$ ) was responsible for copying only nine of the sonatas (nos. 17, 18, 20–23, 33, 43, and 66). The two hands are easy to distinguish. Hand  $\alpha$  writes a characteristically British form of treble clef in which the symbol resembles a lower-case 'g', while hand  $\beta$  employs the more familiar stylized shape used in engraving up to the present day. The two hands seem to have copied from a common stock of music, one person periodically relieving the other. Perhaps the two copyists were closely related (for example, as father and son): at any rate, they operated as a well-functioning team. They share certain special notational habits, all typically British. For example, repeat signs lack dots; trills are omitted, even at cadences; the flat or sharp sign as appropriate is used in place of the natural sign almost throughout.<sup>31</sup> The accuracy of the copying is variable; from time to time, both copyists make emendations to the pitch of notes, often writing in afterwards the letter-names of the notes as altered. Figuring of the bass part is everywhere very light or even totally absent: this was, however, quite normal in the repertory for violin and bass, since the player or players of the continuo part could easily work out most of the intended harmonies from the two-voice framework alone.

To judge from the repertory represented, Add. ms. 31466 was compiled around 1705–10. Fifteen named composers appear, and eleven sonatas are anonymous. In alphabetical order (the number of sonatas credited to each author follows in parentheses) the composers are: Henricus Albicastro (4); Martino Bitti ['Martino'] (7); Carlo Capellini ['Capellini'] (1); Arcangelo Corelli (9); Raphael Courteville ['Courteville'] (1); Thomas Farmer (1); Giorgio Gentili ['Gentilis'] (1); Gottfried Finger (14); Carlo Ambrogio Lonati ['Carlo Ambrosio'] (1); Nicola Matteis Jr ['Young Nicola'] (2); Nicola Matteis Sr ['Old Nicola'] (1); Johann Christoph Pepusch (8); Daniel Purcell (3); Johann Schenck (1); 'Vitalina' [Tommaso Antonio Vitali?] (1). Bitti's seven sonatas are untypical in that they form an unbroken block, running from f. 40v to f. 47r, although Daniel Purcell's three sonatas (ff. 15v–18r) also run consecutively. The sonatas by the three composers most strongly represented — Finger, Corelli and Pepusch — in each case appear in a 'main' block supplemented by a few pieces scattered elsewhere in the volume. There are also a few blocks based on a common key: nos. 4–8 (by Corelli and Finger) are all in A major, nos. 50–53 (by Finger) in E major. It appears that this volume was compiled by joining together, within a very short space of time and without any discernible over-arching plan, the contents of a number of smaller collections organized in a variety of composer-based or key-based ways. This mode of compilation may explain the puzzling mixture of system and haphazardness in the ordering of the sixty-six sonatas. Some of the compositions copied were already quite old — for example, the sonata in A major by Farmer (died 1688) — and some, including Farmer's sonata, were possibly taken from published editions.<sup>32</sup>

Salient details of the group of sonatas by Bitti are given in the table below. In the fourth column, capital letters represent major keys; lower case, minor keys.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Holman has remarked to me privately that the avoidance of the natural sign is indicative of conservative notational habits: English notational practice began to move towards the 'modern' use of the natural only around 1710.

<sup>32</sup> The Farmer sonata had appeared as early as the original edition (London, 1689–90) of *The Second Part of the Division Violin*, but the source used for Add. ms. 31466 may well have been the revised fourth edition of the same anthology (London, Walsh, 1705).



MARTINO BITTI'S SONATAS CONTAINED IN BRITISH LIBRARY ADD. MS. 31466

Serial no.	No. in Add. ms. 31466	Folios	Key	Movement 1	Movement 2	Movement 3	Movement 4
1	XXVIII	40v–41r	Bb	Adagio 4/4	Al[le]manda 2/2	Sarabanda 3/2	[Giga] 12/8
2	XXIX	41v–42r	c	Adagio 4/4	Largo 2/2	Adagio 3/2	[Giga] 12/8
3	XXX	42v–43r	g	[Adagio] 4/4	[Allemanda] 2/2	[Giga] 12/8	—
4	XXXI	43v–44r	A	[Largo] 4/4	[Vivace] 3/[4]	[Adagio] 3/2	[Giga] 12/8
5	XXXII	44v–45r	d	[Adagio] 4/4	[Corrente] 3/4	[Adagio] 3/2	[Giga] 12/8
6	XXXIII	45v–46r	D	[Adagio] 4/4	[Allegro] 4/4	[Adagio] 3/2	[Giga] 12/8
7	XXXIV	46v–47r	a	[Adagio] 4/4	[Allemanda] 2/2	[Adagio] 3/2	[Giga] 12/8

The seven sonatas almost certainly constitute the whole, or at least a large portion, of a planned set of chamber sonatas.<sup>33</sup> They run consecutively, feature seven different keys and display a remarkably consistent sequence of movements. All open with a short, through-composed slow movement in common time resembling the most common kind of prelude encountered in Corelli's chamber sonatas. The second movement is of three possible types: an allemanda (though only once so named) notated in cut time and featuring a short anacrusis; a very similar common-time movement without anacrusis; or a corrente (though only once so named). In six out of the seven sonatas there follows a sarabanda or sarabanda-like movement in 3/2 metre, and the final movement is always a typical giga (though not so named) in 12/8 metre.<sup>34</sup> Strict homotonicity is observed.

### BETWEEN THE LONDON AND DRESDEN SONATAS

Visconti had acted as a champion of Bitti's violin music in London around 1704: after his return to Italy in 1706 it became the turn of another musician to promote it. Support came from a surprising quarter: the Roman cellist and composer Nicola Francesco Haym (1678–1729), who was a prominent figure in the efforts to establish Italian opera in London. The first sign of this advocacy comes in a set of six sonatas for oboe published in Amsterdam by Estienne Roger in May 1710.<sup>35</sup> The title page of the volume describes the works as 'VI Sonate da camera a flauto traversa [*sic*] hauboïs o violino solo e violoncello del [*sic*] Sign. Haim e Martinello Bitti', but it is obvious from the style and instrumental compass of the treble part that the preferred and original instrument is the oboe.<sup>36</sup> The first four sonatas name Haym as the composer; the fifth (far superior musically) names Bitti; the sixth, stylistically unlike the sonatas of both men and therefore probably by a third composer, is unattributed. While it is possible that Roger acquired the sonatas independently, I consider it more likely, in view of a connection between Haym and Bitti to be described shortly, that the former acted as compiler and broker for the volume. It is perhaps not coincidental that Bitti wrote an oboe sonata around 1709–10, since June 1709 is the month when the celebrated Prussian-born oboist Ludwig Erdmann (Lodovico Ertman), fresh from the Ospedale della Pietà in Venice (where he had been a teaching colleague of Vivaldi and met his wife-to-be, the *figlia di coro* Maddalena), became a Tuscan court musician.

The *Post Man* for 11–13 December 1711 carried an announcement from Walsh and Hare for a set of eight sonatas by Bitti for flute (this time, the 'common' flute, which we know today as the treble recorder) or violin. The rather confusing title page reads (up to the imprint):

<sup>33</sup> Adding the work to be described for convenience as 'London Sonata 8' (i.e., the sonata published by Walsh in January 1704) to the seven in the table would produce a group of eight sonatas very comparable with the eight by Bitti for recorder (with violin mentioned as an alternative instrument) brought out by Walsh in 1711.

<sup>34</sup> On the unpredictability of the labelling of dance-like movements in Italian violin sonatas as allemanda, corrente etc., see Michael Talbot, 'The Stylized Dance in Italian Sonatas of the Late Baroque', *De Musica Disserenda*, 2 (2006), 99–105.

<sup>35</sup> The collection is advertised as 'Sonate a flauto traverso, hauboïs o violino solo van Mrs. Haim e Martinello Bitti, 2 gl' in the *Amsterdamsche Courant* of 8 May 1710. Roger later assigned the volume the catalogue number 329.

<sup>36</sup> Perhaps significantly, the 1737 catalogue of Roger's successor Michel-Charles Le Cène lists the sonatas on p. 34 simply as 'Six Sonate [*sic*] à un Hautboïs & B.C. de Mrs. Haim & Martinello Bitti', although they continue to be included in the section for violin solos as well.

Sonate a due Violino, e Basso | Per Suonarsi con Flauto, o'vero Violino | del Signor | Martino Bitti | Sonator di Violino | del | Sereniss:<sup>mo</sup> Gran Principe di Toscana

Because of the absence of a comma after the third word, the title was always liable to be misread as 'Sonate a due Violini, e Basso' (implying that the works were trios rather than solos), as indeed occurred in Johann Gottfried Walther's *Musicalisches Lexicon* of 1732 and many subsequent reference works.<sup>37</sup> It was probably for this very reason that Walsh very quickly reissued them with a modified title page opening 'Solo's for a Flute, with a through Bass for the Harpsicord or Bass Violin'; this second edition was announced in the *Post Man* for 19–21 February 1712.<sup>38</sup>

These sonatas were probably supplied to Walsh via an intermediary, whom one suspects, once again, of being Haym. They were deservedly popular, and in 1722 Giovanni Bononcini paid them the compliment of publishing in London a set of eight recorder sonatas that are strikingly close in overall conception.

In 1714 Roger compiled an anthology of six concertos for up to four violins, viola, cello and continuo, which he dedicated to a banker and commercial agent in Amsterdam, Leon d'Urbino.<sup>39</sup> The dedication mentions that d'Urbino had already heard and applauded the concertos, which leads one to believe that he was a member or patron of a collegium musicum. The title of the collection opens: 'CONCERTS | à 5, 6 & 7 Instrumens, dont il y en a un pour la Trompette ou le Hautbois; | Composez par Messieurs | BITTI, VIVALDI & TORELLI'. Typically for such an anthology, the name of the composer is not given for any individual work, so in the absence of external concordances (and sometimes even in their presence) it can prove impossible to establish authorship. The first concerto is certainly by Vivaldi (RV 276) and the last almost certainly by Torelli. As regards nos. 2–5, I would propose Torelli as the author of the third and Vivaldi as that of the fourth. Bitti is a credible composer for the second, which is the most elaborate and carefully wrought of them all, but the case is very far from certain.<sup>40</sup>

Since we are approaching the year 1715, it is appropriate to insert at this point some information about Alessandro Bitti, Martino's son. He first emerges from total obscurity on 6 April 1715, when Haym introduced the new arrival at a benefit concert at Hickford's room for one of his pupils, the singer Joanna Maria, Baroness Linchenham.<sup>41</sup> On this occasion Alessandro Bitti played several solos. The same occurred at a similar benefit concert for Joanna Maria on 12 April 1717. These appearances are evidence that Haym took the violinist under his wing and argue for a prior connection with the Bitti family, Martino in particular. Press notices report several further public appearances by Alessandro, especially at the Drury Lane theatre. He played solos, sometimes of his own composition, and also concertos. A concert at Stationers' Hall on 23 December 1718 included 'A new Concerto by the great Master Martino Betti, and perform'd by his Brother Alex. Betti, with a solo of his own composing'.<sup>42</sup>

It could — at a pinch — be credible that Alessandro, who was still alive in 1755, was indeed a younger brother of Martino, but archival documents cited by Kirkendale and the appearance together of Martino and an unnamed son in the opera orchestra at Lucca in 1730 suggest that it was Martino's eldest son, named Cristofano in Florentine sources, who travelled to England, where he apparently adopted the name Alessandro.<sup>43</sup>

From June 1718 until December 1721 Alessandro was first violinist in the ensemble maintained at Cannons by James Brydges, Earl of Carnavon (from 1719, Duke of Chandos), where he will have encountered Handel. Thereafter, his career drifted. He played in the opera

<sup>37</sup> Johann Gottfried Walther *Musicalisches Lexicon oder musicalische Bibliothec* (Leipzig, Deer, 1732), 96. Smith, *Bibliography*, lists this edition on p. 119 as no. 396.

<sup>38</sup> No. 401 in Smith, *Bibliography*, 120–21.

<sup>39</sup> The publication is numbered 188 in Roger's catalogue. Leon d'Urbino was probably a member of Amsterdam's thriving Jewish community, prominent in the city's commercial life. See Michael Talbot, 'The Concerto Collection "Roger no. 188": Its Origin, Nature and Content', *Studi vivaldiani*, 12 (2012), 3–36.

<sup>40</sup> See the article mentioned in the preceding note for more details concerning this anthology, and also for a fuller account of Alessandro Bitti and his relationship to Martino.

<sup>41</sup> Reported in the *Daily Courant* of the same day.

<sup>42</sup> *Daily Courant* of 22 December 1718. In Richard Maunder, *The Scoring of Baroque Concertos* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2004), 126, the suggestion is made that Alessandro played the concerto by Martino published in the Roger anthology, but this is highly speculative.

<sup>43</sup> Kirkendale, *The Court Musicians*, 434. On the appearance of the two men in Lucca, see earlier, note 6.

orchestra in London, briefly visited Jamaica around 1727 and ended up as one of many Italian-born musicians who led an itinerant existence as salaried professionals in the service of provincial music societies or as private music teachers. The last known mention of him is in the subscription list for 1755 of the Royal Society of Musicians.<sup>44</sup>

## THE DRESDEN SONATAS

It is impossible to say whether the six compositions acquired in 1717 and preserved in Dresden represent Bitti's compositional style as it had become by the 1710s or preserve an earlier stratum. In certain respects, the Dresden sonatas seem to mark a stylistic advance over the London sonatas, but since the latter are predominantly in 'chamber' style, whereas the Dresden sonatas adopt a mixed 'church' and 'chamber' style, any general differences between the two groups are not necessarily valid as chronological markers. Since the manuscripts of all four 'solo' sonatas in Dresden are clearly commercial copies acquired from a *copisteria*, the originals may well have lain on its shelves for a very long time. It is likewise impossible to know whether the four sonatas collected by Pisendel were customized for him or were simply selected from a larger assortment to suit his preferences. Whatever the case, they have a distinctive profile, displaying a new panache and inventiveness, best exemplified by the 'double-stopped' fugues, as English writers of the period would have described them.

The essential bibliographical features of the four sonatas in Dresden are set out in the table below.<sup>45</sup> All are notated on either one or two bifolios in oblong quarto format, with ten pre-ruled staves per page. Three hands (called here A, B and C) are represented. Hands A and C copied out Dresden Sonatas 1 and 3, respectively, while Hand B was responsible for the two longer works, Sonatas 2 and 4. Very likely, the manuscripts had a common provenance: a copisteria, probably in Florence and employing at least three different copyists. All the copies contain inaccuracies, but this is in no way remarkable for the period. The manuscripts of Sonatas 2, 3, and 4 did not originally name the composer — indeed, for Sonata 3 not even the genre is specified — but, as the last column of the table shows, a later hand, which a comparison with other Dresden sources reveals to be that of Pisendel himself, has inked in the authorship.

MARTINO BITTI'S VIOLIN SONATAS IN DRESDEN

Serial no.	Shelfmark	Key	Dimensions	Folios	Hand	Original Title	Additional text
1	2362-R-1	C	21.5 x 29 cm	2 ff.	A	Suonata a Violino solo del Sig. <sup>r</sup> Martino Bitti	—
2	2362-R-2	D	22 x 29.5 cm	4 ff.	B	Sonata à solo	Del Sig. <sup>re</sup> Martini Bitti
3	2362-R-3	g	22 x 29 cm	2 ff.	C	—	Del Sig. <sup>re</sup> Martino Bitti
4	2-R-8,54	A.	22 x 29 cm	4 ff.	B	Sonata, a solo	Martin.

### Notes

In column 2, the shelfmarks all open with the prefix 'Mus.'

In column 4, the dimensions given are approximate and slightly variable.

In column 8, the entry for Sonata 4 ('Martin.') is written not after the title but in the lower left-hand corner of the otherwise void f. 4v.

No later published compositions by Martino Bitti survive. However, Le Cène brought out in 1723–24 a collection described on p. 43 of his 1737 catalogue as 'Martinello Bitti XII. sonate a Violino solo e basso continuo' (catalogue no. 499). Moreover, the inventory of Le Cène's manuscripts compiled after his death in 1743 lists as item 41 '6 Sonate a Violino Solo de Martino Bitti', which was probably printer's copy for a further set that in the event never

<sup>44</sup> Betty Matthews, *The Royal Society of Musicians of Great Britain: List of Members 1738–1984* (London, Royal Society of Musicians, 1985), 24.

<sup>45</sup> Other bibliographical details, including those pertaining to the texts appearing on the folders that were added much later (c.1765) to house the works belonging to the *Hofkapelle*, can be found both on the RISM website (<http://opac.rism.info/>) and on that of the SLUB (<http://www.slub-dresden.de/startseite/>), where digitized reproductions of the originals are consultable.

came out, and as item 37 '6 Concerts de plusieurs auteurs, Marchitelli, et Bitti &c.'<sup>46</sup> If, as seems likely, the six unpublished violin sonatas postdated the twelve published ones, they provide striking evidence of Bitti's undimmed ambition as a composer in his seventies or even eighties.

## THE CAMBRIDGE SONATAS

Even if Bitti's violin sonatas sent to Amsterdam are lost, we are fortunate to possess an autograph manuscript set datable approximately to the 1720s, which may have had some relationship to the sets received by Le Cène. The provenance of the manuscript in question, held under the shelfmark MU.MS.662 by the Fitzwilliam Reference Library in Cambridge, can be traced right back to its illustrious first owner. It was sold to the Fitzwilliam Museum in March 1919 by William Barclay Squire (1855–1927), Music Librarian at the British Museum, who had acquired it in an auction sale, at Sotheby's on 13 May 1918, of manuscripts belonging to the Earls of Aylesford.<sup>47</sup> The 3rd Earl of Aylesford, Heneage Finch (1715–77), inherited most of his collection from his cousin Charles Jennens (1700–73), known for his friendship with Handel and compilation of the libretto for the latter's *Messiah*. Jennens, in turn, had received most of the manuscripts of Italian music in his collection from his friend Edward Holdsworth (1684–1746), who visited the continent frequently as a cicerone to young men undertaking the Grand Tour. In 1742 Holdsworth purchased for Jennens in Rome a very large assortment of manuscript music from the library of Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni (1667–1740), and it is to this important subgroup of the Aylesford manuscripts that MU.MS.662 evidently once belonged.<sup>48</sup>

As an important employer and patron of musicians in Rome, Ottoboni hardly needs introduction.<sup>49</sup> From the time when, in 1689, he was raised to the purple numerous musicians, mostly from outside his *famiglia*, dedicated or presented to him printed or manuscript collections of music. Before the 1720s these were mixed in character: the series begins in 1694 with trio sonatas — Corelli's Op. 4 chamber sonatas and Albinoni's Op. 1 church sonatas — and continues with T. A. Vitali's *Concerto di sonate*, Op. 4 (1701), Mascitti's Op. 5 violin sonatas (1714), Caldara's Op. 4 motets (1715) and Boni's Op. 1 cello sonatas (1717). From this point onwards, however, sonatas for violin and bass, manuscript or published, come to dominate absolutely. In the first category we have sets by Bitti and Schiassi,<sup>50</sup> both of which can be dated tentatively to the 1720s or 1730s, as well as Vivaldi's famous 'Manchester' set; in the second, G. B. Somis's Op. 4 sonatas (1726) and Mossi's Op. 6 sonatas (1733). None of the three manuscript sets is dedicated to Ottoboni by name on the title page, and it remains uncertain whether he commissioned them from their respective composers or whether the initiative for the presentation came from the musicians themselves.

The manuscript containing the twelve Cambridge sonatas comprises 32 folios of music paper in oblong quarto format measuring approximately 24 by 30 cm after trimming. Inside the front cover of the modern binding is a shelfmark, NM/9, originating from Jennens, another shelfmark, 52.B.17, relating to the Aylesford collection and a red crayon mark, 'No. 485', added at the time of the auction. All except two of the sonatas — 'Sonata 10:<sup>a</sup>' and 'Sonata 11:<sup>a</sup>' in the nomenclature of the volume — occupy an independent gathering of four or six folios, often ending or even beginning with a page void of music notation. Exceptionally, the eleventh sonata begins on the *verso* of the folio (f. 29) on which the tenth ends, probably in order to save paper.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>46</sup> See Rudolf Rasch, 'I manoscritti musicali nel lascito di Michel-Charles Le Cène', in *Intorno a Locatelli. Studi in occasione del tricentenario della nascita di Pietro Antonio Locatelli (1695–1764)*, ed. Albert Dunning (Lucca, LIM, 1995), 1039–70, at 1067–68. Roger and Le Cène appear to have discarded after use the originals from which they prepared their editions, so the presence of a homogeneous group of six or twelve single-authored works among the manuscripts in the firm's possession is a *prima facie* indication of material awaiting publication.

<sup>47</sup> It was probably included among the sixteen items, mostly unidentified, sold as Lot 313. On the Aylesford manuscripts, see especially John H. Roberts, 'The Aylesford Collection', in *Handel Collections and Their History*, ed. Terence Best (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993), 39–85.

<sup>48</sup> On Holdsworth's purchases in Italy for Jennens, see especially Michael Talbot, 'Charles Jennens and Antonio Vivaldi', in *Vivaldi veneziano europeo*, ed. Francesco Degrada (Florence, Olschki, 1980), 67–75.

<sup>49</sup> The most comprehensive discussion to date of Ottoboni's musical establishment is Stefano La Via, 'Il Cardinale Ottoboni e la musica: nuovi documenti (1700–1740), nuove letture e ipotesi', in *Intorno a Locatelli* (see earlier, note 46), 319–526.

<sup>50</sup> 'Sonate a violino solo', Fitzwilliam Museum, MU.MS.654. This volume, too, probably belonged to Lot 313.

<sup>51</sup> Since the manuscript, calligraphic in appearance, was evidently copied from earlier manuscripts, the copyist (whom we believe to be Bitti himself) would have been able to calculate in advance the precise requirement of paper for each sonata.

The paper is ruled with ten staves on each page, allowing five two-stave systems. The regularity of the rastrography and the choice of oblong format mark it out as being of Italian origin. The paper resembles that used for Bitti's concerto in D major preserved in Dresden. Moreover the hand employed for the musical notation and lettering is recognizably the same as that used for the concerto: the style of the symbol for common time (an elongated 'C'), the shape of the treble clef, the form of the crotchet rest and the peculiar way of writing sharps (the two short horizontal strokes are linked with an idiosyncratic loop) are among the salient similarities. Moreover, there is a now illegible deleted inscription in the top right-hand corner of f. 1v (perhaps Bitti's name, made redundant by its appearance in the title on f. 1r) which has been obliterated by a series of dense interlocking spirals resembling those used to make a cut in the last movement of the concerto. In the case of the concerto the possibility was raised that this was a holograph of the composer. Since the manuscript containing the Cambridge sonatas contains other features characteristic of holographs, this surmise now becomes a strong probability. The clearest sign that the scribe is the author is the extreme care with which the ends of slurs have been brought close to the heads of the notes on which they start and finish — almost, one might say, in the manner of a modern writer — and quite alien to the generality of eighteenth-century copyists, who were notably lax over such matters. In every respect the score is written out with exceptional clarity and accuracy.

The title of the collection is written in the centre of the upper half of f. 1r, reading simply: 'Sonate a Violino Solo | Di Martino Bitti'. This unusually informal, almost laconic description may be taken as further evidence of the manuscript's autograph status.<sup>52</sup>

The table below gives the basic details of each sonata. Note that staves and folios void of musical notation at the beginning or end of a gathering containing a sonata are included in the description of foliation.

#### MARTINO BITTI'S SONATAS IN CAMBRIDGE

Serial no.	Folios	Key	Movt 1	Movt 2	Movt 3	Movt 4	Movt 5
1	1r-4v	c	Un poco Andante 6/8	Allegro 2/4	Adagio 4/4	Minuetto 3/4	Gavotta 2/4
2	5r-6v	a	Preludio Adagio 4/4	A tempo giusto 4/4	Corrente Larghetto 3/4	Giga Allegro 12/8	
3	7r-8v	Bb	Preludio Adagio 4/4	A tempo giusto 4/4	Largo 3/2	Giga Allegro 12/8	
4	9r-10v	G	Largo 4/4	Allegro 2/4	Largo 3/4	Allegro assai 6/8	
5	11r-14v	D	Adagio 4/4	Allegro 4/4	Largo 3/2	Allegro 3/8	
6	15r-16v	C	Adagio 4/4	Vivaldi 4/4	Adagio 3/2	Allegro 2/4	
7	17r-20v	D	Allegro 4/4	Adagio 4/4	Allegro 4/4	Largo 4/4	Allegro 3/4
8	21r-22v	A	Preludio un poco Andante 12/8	Vivace 4/4	Sarabanda Largo 3/4	Allegro assai 6/8	
9	23r-26v	C	Vivace 4/4	Largo 6/8	Andante 3/4	Allegro 12/8	
10	27r-29r	a	Largo 4/4	Allegro 4/4	Adagio 4/4	Allegro 3/4	
11	29v-33v	F	A tempo giusto	Vivace 2/4	Largo 3/8 [=3/4]	Presto 6/8	Minuet Allegro 3/4
12	34r-38v	A	Vivace 3/4	Andante 3/8	Tempo di Gavotta 2/4	Allegro 12/8	

<sup>52</sup> The online Newton catalogue listing the holdings of the many libraries, including that of the Fitzwilliam Museum, within the University of Cambridge does not claim that MU.MS.662 is autograph, but this description appears in commercial and publicity material associated with the collection.

In comparison with the London and Dresden sonatas, the greatest novelty of the Cambridge set is the profusion of ornamental detail in the violin part. This is concentrated in the movements marked 'Adagio' or 'Largo', but by no means limited to them. This fashion for selectively writing out ornamentation rather than relying on the performer to supply all of it (as in the London sonatas) became increasingly evident as the eighteenth century progressed; I have elsewhere termed it the 'semi-ornamented style'.<sup>53</sup> The difference between the plain and the semi-ornamented style comes into sharper relief on account of a remarkable fact: two of the Cambridge sonatas are new versions, in each of their four movements, of earlier sonatas from the London group, and another reworks two movements from a London sonata. The nature of the changes ranges from the simple addition of ornamentation to more substantial alterations amounting to paraphrase. Cambridge Sonatas 2 and 3 recast London Sonatas 7 and 1, respectively, in this fashion, while the first and fourth movements of Cambridge Sonata 12 are based on the second and fourth movements of London Sonata 4. In addition, the second movement of Cambridge Sonata 5 is based on the corresponding movement in London Sonata 6, 'motto' form being used in place of the original binary form. Finally, the opening theme of the first movement of Cambridge Sonata 4 is a major-key variant of that standing at the head of the third movement of Dresden Sonata 3. That Bitti should have chosen in a few instances to update old sonatas rather than compose entirely new ones should not surprise, for this was typical practice for the age.

The Cambridge sonatas evidence Bitti's desire to keep abreast of some of the new developments that were occurring in instrumental music in the 1720s. The most conspicuous example of this is the presence of three movements (in Sonatas 9, 11 and 12) in which the basic movement is followed by two or more variations. The 1720s were the decade when variation form first became fashionable in Italian instrumental music. Noteworthy examples occur in the violin sonatas of Carbonelli (1729) and the flute sonatas of Locatelli (Op. 2, 1732), as well as in the flute concertos of Vivaldi (Op. 10, 1729). Another sign of changing times is the adoption of the parallel key (the tonic minor) for the second movement of Sonata 9, where, in an earlier period, only the relative minor key would have been thought appropriate. The absence of complex fugal writing such as we encounter in the Dresden sonatas could also be regarded as a progressive trait, but this feature may in reality have as much to do with Ottoboni's taste as with Bitti's stylistic evolution. Considering his advanced age when these sonatas were composed, Bitti's readiness to update his style in many of its aspects is truly remarkable.

Since these sonatas and the manuscript group in London here were not known to me at the time when I wrote my article for *The Consort*,<sup>54</sup> there is obviously some catching up to do as regards the musical evaluation of the sonatas as a whole. But the priority at present is to introduce this very attractive and skilfully written music to performers and to the musical world at large so that Bitti can at last win recognition as a significant contributor to the repertory of the late-Baroque violin sonata. As a member of the team of three editors (Alessandro Borin, Antonio Frigé and myself) responsible for the series of violin sonatas by Bitti to be published by Edition HH, I take this opportunity to thank the publisher for making it possible to begin realizing this aim.

## UPDATE 1 (28 APRIL 2014)

Untidy though this may appear to some, I think it is best to make additions or revisions to my article in the form of updates rather than to attempt to work the new material into the original text. In that way, the ways in which the picture has changed will be clearer, and the reader will run less risk of confusing one 'state' of the article with another.

This update has been prompted especially by my discovery of three new violin sonatas by Bitti in the SLUB. All three are anonymous in the original sources, which must be the reason why they were hitherto overlooked.

<sup>53</sup> Michael Talbot, *Tomaso Albinoni: The Venetian Composer and His World* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993), 150–51.

<sup>54</sup> See earlier, note 5.

The first is a melodious four-movement sonata in B flat major (shelfmark Mus. 2-R-8,3). The score, on Italian paper, is in Pisendel's hand, and there is also a separate, non-autograph bass part added, it would appear, in Dresden. The last movement, a Giga (which Pisendel calls 'Gigue'), is identical with the fourth movement of the first 'London' sonata, which also turns up in the third 'Cambridge' sonata. In the case of instrumental music in use in Dresden one must always bear in mind the possibility of a pasticcio combining movements of more than one work, so it is important to examine all the movements for stylistic compatibility. In the present case, the expected fingerprints of Bitti are present in force, so the sonata can be safely declared genuine. (In any case, Pisendel would hardly have thought of creating a pasticcio while still in Italy.)

The other two sonatas, which have strong structural and textural resemblances, explore with even more intensity than the second and fourth 'Dresden' sonatas Bitti's penchant for polyphonic playing on the violin. The one in A major (Mus. 2-R-8,102) is written in Pisendel's hand, that in C minor (Mus. 2-R-8,51) in that of an unknown Italian copyist. Their attribution to Bitti is made partly on bibliographical grounds (the A major sonata shares the paper type of the D major 'Dresden' sonata), but mainly because of their very strong stylistic similarity to the authenticated sonatas, which extends to certain melodic phrases actually shared with known Bitti compositions. A detailed justification for their attribution to Bitti will be made elsewhere. I plan to discuss the second movement of the new A major sonata, a splendid specimen of a 'double-stopped' fugue, in a forthcoming article comparing eight such fugues, all in A major and in common time, by Corelli, Bitti, Albinoni, Carbonelli and Zuccari.

The other revision I need to make at this point is to correct my earlier surmise that Alessandro and Cristofano Bitti were the same person. I now believe that Alessandro was indeed Martino's younger brother and that Cristofano was Martino's son (therefore Alessandro's nephew), and that both men were active concurrently in Britain. Cristofano is probably identical with the 'Chris. Batti' who in 1741 supplied music, including some of his own 'solos' for violin, to Godfrey Wentworth, a landowner who was a leading figure in the musical society at York.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup> *Historical Manuscripts Commission: Report on manuscripts in various collections. Vol. ii: The manuscripts of Sir George Wombwell [...] and Mrs. Wentworth of Woolley*, London, H M. Stationery Office, 1908, p. 419.