

**Alessandro Piccinini** \* 30. Dec. 1566, in Bologna, + *ca.* 1638. He was the most illustrious member of a lute playing family, comprising his father Leonardo Maria (+ *ca.* 1597) and brothers Girolamo (\* 1573 + *ca.* 1610) and Filippo (\* 1575 + 1648). The father and sons worked in Ferrara under Duke Alfonso II Este from 1582 until Alfonso's death in 1597, by which time Alessandro was among the most highly paid musicians in the Este employ. From 1598 Alessandro and his brothers served Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini in Rome, and documents show regular payments to the lutenists from 1601-1606. By 1610, Girolamo Piccinini was dead in Flanders in the service of Cardinal Guido Bentivoglio.

Alessandro's close relationship with the Bentivoglio household from 1607-1624 is testified by over three dozen letters, ranging from discussions of money and wine, to the recruitment of musicians and requests for lute works. By 1611, Piccinini and his wife had returned to Bologna. Meanwhile, Filippo Piccinini moved to Torino in 1608 to work under the Duke of Savoy. In 1613 he moved to the Spanish court in Madrid lasting until 1631, when he returned to Bologna; in 1627 he was one of the composers of the opera, *La selva sin amor*, set to a libretto by Lope de Vega, and contributed a song to Radesca's collection of 1610.

Alessandro's *Intavolatura di liuto, et di chitarrone* (Bologna, 1623) contains works for archlute and chitarrone, and is essentially a retrospective that the 57-year-old author had begun compiling by 1611. The lute works are grounded in Renaissance counterpoint and are rhyth-

mically and harmonically conservative for the period. Many of the toccatas unfold in sections of chords, imitative subjects, wide-ranging scales, and triple-meter sections, while the dances feature attractive melodies and a skillful interplay between treble and bass registers. The chitarrone works employ the new techniques for the instrument, such as slurred scales, cross-stringing, and arpeggiation, and possess an attractive melodic charm and an understated virtuosity.

The detailed "avvertimenti" address topics from playing cleanly, to dynamics, ornaments, hand position, slurs, and playing *durezza*. In addition, Piccinini chronicles his role in the invention of the archlute and chitarrone, corroborating information we know from other sources, but raising some questions as to the veracity of his claims.

The generally uneven works in the posthumous 1639 *Intavolatura* were collected by Alessandro's son Leonardo Maria, who contributed some efforts of his own.

#### **Works:**

A. Piccinini, *Intavolatura di liuto, et di chitarrone Libro Primo* (Bologna, 1623; facs. Florence, 1983): 39 toccatas; 17 gagliarde; 23 correnti; 5 canzoni; 4 variations w/partite; 4 arie; 2 ricercari; 1 balletto; 1 ciaccona.

*Intavolatura di Liuto di Alessandro Piccinini Libro secondo... Raccolte da Leonardo Maria Piccinini Suo Figliulo* (Bologna, 1639; facs. Florence, 1983: 8 toccatas; 11 correnti; 4 gagliarde; 2 passacaglie; 2 ciaccone; 2 ricercari; 1 Battaglia; 1 Bergamasca; 1 Sarabanda

Filippo Piccinini, "Filli gentile" in Enrico Radesca di Foggia, *Il quarto libro delle canzonette*

(Venice, 1610); facs. *Italian Secular Song, 1606-1636*, vol. 4, ed. G. Tomlinson (New York, 1986).

### Modern editions:

*Alexandri Piccinini: Opera. Intavolatura di liuto e di chitarrone Libro Primo*, ed. M. Caffagni, 2 vols. (Bologna, 1962).

*Sämtliche Werke von Laute solo*. Ed. D. Perret, R. Correa & M. Chatton, 2 vols. (Wilhelmshaven, 1983).

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- V. Coelho, *The Manuscript Sources of Seventeenth-Century Italian Lute Music* (New York, 1995).
- V. Coelho (ed.), *Performance on Lute, Guitar, and Vihuela* (Cambridge, 1997).
- V. Coelho, "Marino's *Toccata* between the Lutenist and the Nightingale," in *The Sense of Marino*, ed. F. Guardiani (New York & Toronto, 1994), 395-427.
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- L. deGrandis, "Famiglie di musicisti del '500. I Piccinini: vita col Liuto," *Nuova rivista musicale italiana* 16 (1982), 226-32.
- D. Fabris, *Mecenati e Musicisti* (Lucca, 1999).
- L. Frati, "Liutisti e liutai a Bologna," *Rivista musicale italiana* 26 (1919), 94-111.
- G. Kinsky, "Alessandro Piccinini und sein Arciliuto," *Acta Musicologica* 10 (1938), 103-18.
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A. Newcomb, "Girolamo Frescobaldi, 1608-1615," *Annales Musicologiques* 7 (1964-1977), 139-140.

A. Newcomb, *The Madrigal at Ferrara, 1579-1597*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1980).

M.G. Profeti, "Spettacoli musicali a corte tra Firenze e Madrid: *La selva sin amor* e d'intorni," in *Rime e suoni alla spagnola*, ed. G. Veneziano (Florence, 2003), 97-108.

L. Stein, *Songs of Mortals, Dialogues of the Gods* (Oxford, 1993).

D.A. Smith, "On the Origin of the Chitarrone," *JAMS* 32 (1979), 440-62.

VICTOR COELHO