



## Hermeneutik zu Johann Sebastian Bach



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Sollten Ihnen Fehler auffallen, so sind wir für Hinweise dankbar.

Kontakt: [dvvlio@innovation-orgellehre.digital](mailto:dvvlio@innovation-orgellehre.digital)

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Contact: [dvvlio@innovation-orgellehre.digital](mailto:dvvlio@innovation-orgellehre.digital)

Hochschule  
für Musik  
Würzburg  
university of music



Stiftung  
Innovation in der  
Hochschullehre

FIORI MUSICALI  
DIVERSE COMPOSITIONI  
TOCCATE, KIRIE, CANZONI  
CAPRICCI, E RECERCARI

IN PARTITUR A QUATTRO

Hermeneutics before Bach

Research and research results by Christoph Bossert

AVTORE

GIROLAMO FRESCOBALDI

Feature 6

Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Fiori musicali* (1635)

and its three organ masses in Bach's copy

OPERA DVODECIMA.

CON PRIVILEGIO.

Hermeneutics  
instructional video in 12  
features

with

Prof. Dr h. c. Christoph Bossert  
on the Klais organ (2016) in the Great Hall of the  
Würzburg University of Music

A production of the third-party funded project *Digitalisation, Networking and Mediation in the Teaching of International Organ Art* (DVVLIO) at the Würzburg University of Music 2021-2024.

The project is funded by the Foundation for *Innovation in University Teaching*.

Project objective: Development of a digital organ teaching library.

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Appresso Alessandro Vincenti. MDCXXXV.

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## Feature 6

### Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Fiori musicali* from 1635 in Bach's copy

The following short features will focus on the connections between Johann Sebastian Bach and Girolamo Frescobaldi, Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer, Johann Pachelbel and Dietrich Buxtehude. Let's start in this Feature 6 with Girolamo Frescobaldi, organist at St Peter's Basilica in Rome. He published the *Fiori musicali* in 1635. The *Fiori musicali* contain three organ masses as a mass for general Sundays, a mass for the Apostles' feast days / holidays and finally the *Messa della Madonna*. There is a riddle in this third organ mass. I would now like to talk about this riddle.

It is a puzzle with the following question: there are six notes on offer that are to be used as an additional part to an existing piece - but where? Frescobaldi explicitly states that they should be sung and not played. So a fifth voice is to be added by singing it, but where and with what words? And how is it to be understood that these six notes are notated in triple metre, while the *ricercar* in which they are to be heard is in quadruple or duple metre? These are veritable paradoxes and that would now be the issue at hand.

This riddle is preceded by a *tocatta* - *Tocata Avanti il Recercar*. We must then also discuss this *tocatta* in detail. The question - to move on to the methodological steps - is as follows: How does a path towards the finding, then the question of the path to solving the riddle, etc., take shape? The findings naturally include the question of which elements the puzzle contains.

The tone sequence of these six tones is:



In this 'riddle *ricercar*', the *Soggetto*  picks up these six tones and imitates them as follows:



Fig. 1: Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Messa della Madonna* (1635), *Recercar Con obligo di Cantare la Quinta parte senza Tocarla*.

But what words are then sung to the six notes and where is the location? That is a question on the way to the findings. The findings also include the fact that the *Tocata* and 'Rätsel- Ricercar' pieces in question follow the Credo at some point during the mass. However, according to the order of the pieces in Frescobaldi's *Messa della Madonna*, this must happen before the Elevation, meaning that they must be played before the words of institution for the consecration.

The way to the solution: If you compare the three organ masses, masses one and two show no music between Credo and Elevation. There is also no plausible place where music could be heard. That was precisely the starting point for the solution - as I see it - but it wasn't me who found it. It was me: When we discussed the *Fiori musicali* in the organ seminars at this university, Martin Sturm offered such a plausible solution that I would like to let him have his say later (see Feature 7). I think he was able to solve this riddle, and probably for the first time since it was posed by Frescobaldi - unless we assume that Johann Sebastian Bach had found a solution to this riddle. That would be another exciting question. This *Tocata* and the following 'riddle *ricercar*' therefore have a special place within these three organ masses.

But the findings also include the following: Frescobaldi's *tocatta* reads as follows:



Fig. 2: Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Messa della Madonna, Toccata Avanti il Recercar.*

Once again the beginning of this *tocata* (see fig. 2 above, bars 1-2).

Now the beginning of the first piece of the *Orgelbüchlein* by Johann Sebastian Bach *Nun komm der Heyden Heylandt*



Fig. 3: Johann Sebastian Bach, *Orgelbüchlein, Nun komm der Heyden Heylandt.*




Fig. 4: Johann Sebastian Bach, *Orgelbüchlein, Nun komm der Heyden Heylandt*, digital copy of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz, D-B Mus.ms. Bach P 283.

The beginning is strikingly similar, it is a figured arpeggio, and in the beginnings of Fresco Baldi's toccatas, only this kind of figuration in this toccata is really almost identical to Bach's figured arpeggio of *Nun komm der Heyden Heylandt* at the beginning of the *Orgelbüchlein*. If this finding is correct, it would mean that Bach pays homage, as it were, to the organist of St Peter's Basilica in Rome at the beginning of his *Orgelbüchlein* by using the Advent hymn

*Now comes the fairyland, The  
virgin's child is recognised, That  
all the world marvels,  
God ordered such a birth for him.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Text after Paul Wagner, *Andächtiger Seelen geistliches Brand- und Gantz-Opfer/ Das ist vollständiges Gesangbuch : In Acht unterschiedlichen Theilen/ [...]*, Vol. I, Leipzig 1697.

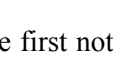

with Frescobaldi's *Messa della Madonna*, thus, as it were, placing the two denominations in relation to one another. However, if the finding is correct and if one agrees with it, he also places the Roman liturgy of the Mass and the Protestant liturgy of the word in a relationship with its hymns. But he also juxtaposes a printed work on the use of music in church services - namely by Frescobaldi - with his *Orgelbüchlein*, which he understands as a manual for organists; and so the one textbook for organists would again correlate with the other textbook. I pointed out very similar correlations between Steigleder's 40 Variations and Bach's *The Art of Fugue* in the previous feature.<sup>2</sup> It could therefore have been Bach's method to formulate his own works in a correlation to the models he found in the generations of the 17th century.

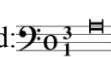

I will now return to the six tones of the 'Riddle Ricercar' and would like to link a new departure in Bach's work to it.<sup>3</sup> Its six notes are: 


Now, in comparison, the Soggetto of the Fuga in A minor [N1] from the Well-Tempered *Clavier* (I) :



Fig. 5: Johann Sebastian Bach, *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier* (I), Fuga in A minor BWV 865, Soggetto.

The bridge would be the following: The first notes  would be expressed by .

The repetition of the note c would also be expressed:  becomes .

The ending of the Soggetto that Bach uses in the A minor fugue is  and corresponds exactly to the last four notes of the ricercar. This would be a precipitation [N1].

A second example would be the Credo from the third part of the piano exercise, *Wir glauben all' an einen Gott* with its famous *basso ostinato* [N2]:



Fig. 6: Johann Sebastian Bach, *Clavier Übung* III, *Wir glauben all an einen Gott* BWV 680.



and in the A minor performance:



Fig. 7: Johann Sebastian Bach, *Clavier Übung* III, *Wir glauben all an einen Gott* BWV 680, mm. 13-19.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. short feature 5.

<sup>3</sup> These findings are labelled below with [N1] (first precipitation) to [N6] (sixth precipitation).


When the ostinato now sounds in A minor, its beginning is  and its ending . This momentum from the beginning and end of the ostinato sounds six times [N3] in this music. So a precipitation would also be conceivable here.

*Clavier Übung* III is nothing other than the so-called 'organ mass'. Kyrie, Gloria, catechism hymns are framed by Praeludium at the beginning and four duets and fugue at the end. This would again be a blatant precipitation [N4].

Another expression [5] of Frescobaldi's enigmatic Soggetto is, for example, the theme of the A minor fugue as an organ piece [N5]



Fig. 8: Johann Sebastian Bach, Fuga in A minor for organ BWV 543, Soggetto.

So basically, this beginning  could also be related to the six notes and finally - you have to have good ears - in the art of fugue, the beginning of Contrapunctus 10 [N6]. Listen to these notes:

, namely



Fig. 9: Johann Sebastian Bach, Art of Fugue, *Contrapunctus 10* BWV 1080, Soggetto.

Here, too, a clear precursor [N6] to Frescobaldi's six riddle tones could be stated.

Now I would like to give Martin Sturm the floor to explain his solution to this puzzle and how to find suitable words for six syllables of what is to be sung.



Concept

Prof. Dr h. c. Christoph Bossert

Coordination

Thilo Frank

Camera

Dr Jürgen Schöpf

Sound and

editing:

Alexander Hainz

Writing and music examples: Andrea

Dubrauszky

Third-party funded project at the  
University of Music Würzburg 2021-2024

Supported by the Foundation  
for Innovation in University  
Teaching

Hochschule  
für Musik  
Würzburg  
university of music



Stiftung  
Innovation in der  
Hochschullehre