



## Hermeneutik zu Johann Sebastian Bach



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# FIORI MUSICALI

DI

DIVERSE COMPOSITIONI

TOCCATE · KIRIE · CANZONI

Hermeneutics before Bach

Research and research results by Christoph Bossert

VTILI PER SONATORI

AVTORE

GIROLAMO FRESCOBALDI

ORGANISTA DI SAN PIETRO

Feature 7

Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Fiori musicali* (1635) - 'Riddle Ricercar'

The solution by Martin Sturm

Christoph Bossert and Martin Sturm in dialogue

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

IN VENETIA,

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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**Literature and music examples used (last retrieval: 21/11/2023)**

**IMSLP:**

Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Fiori musicali 1635*

IMSLP363773-PMLP181690-frescobaldi\_fiori\_musicali\_1635, title page and p. 84.

Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Fiori musicali 1635*, edited by Jolando Scarpa, 2012. URL: [Part of the [Werner Icking Music Collection](#)] via

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[https://vmirror.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/f/fe/IMSLP213599-WIMA.1448-Fiori\\_musicali.pdf](https://vmirror.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/f/fe/IMSLP213599-WIMA.1448-Fiori_musicali.pdf)

**Tobi's music archive:**

< <https://tobis-notenarchiv.de/wp/bach-archiv/> >, last retrieval: 02/08/2023.



## Feature 7

### Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Fiori musicali* (1635) - 'Riddle Ricercar' The solution from Martin Sturm

(Excerpt from a dialogue between Prof. Christoph Bossert and Prof. Martin Sturm, Weimar)

In Feature 7, you will experience an excerpt from a conversation between Martin Sturm and Christoph Bossert, which centres on the topic of '*Hermeneutics on Bach*' and the main features of the Bach theory that Christoph Bossert has been developing together with Andrea Dubrauszky since around 2003.

The discussion of Frescobaldi's *Messa della Madonna* therefore presupposes some previously developed ideas, which are also set down in notes at the relevant points.

#### Reflecting on musical secrets

**CB:** One could now arrive at an exaggerated paradox in the sense of dialectics. Non-textualised music, of all things, is able to grasp the events between the notes in an abstract way. Non-textualised music then reveals the real secret, because non-textualised music leaves everything open. A textual music defines 'word' in relation to the notes just composed, but a non-textual music is the open space - song without words - but words want to be associated: "*Ich steh an deiner Krippen hier*"; *Exclamatio*, whatever; 5-6-5-10 - provided the words are found.

#### Note 1

*I stand here at your cot*

This refers to the following discovery by Martin Sturm:

The inversion of notes 1 to 8 of the bass of the Goldberg Variations and the 14 *Canones* leads to this song:

g f sharp e d H c d G [Basso ostinato]

vs.

e a hc' a g f e

*I'm standing here at my crib*

The notes e-a-h-c'-a-g-f-e then result from the reflection on the axis f-f-sharp / c-b in the mode

g	become	e	<i>here</i>
	s		
F	become	f	<i>pen</i>
sharp	s		
e	become	g	<i>Krip-</i>
	s		
d	become	a	<i>ner</i>
	s		
H	become	c	<i>dei</i>
	s		

c	become	h	<i>on</i>
	s		
d	become	a	<i>stand</i>
	s		
G	become	e	<i>I</i>
	s		

## Note 2

5-6-5-10 refers to the numerical value of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet of the name of God YHWH:

$$H+W+H+J = 5+6+5+10 = 26.$$

[the Hebrew language is read from right to left] [end of notes 1 and 2]

**CB:** And now - I think - this would be the place to talk about your finding very specific words in the face of Frescobaldi's riddle in the third of his organ masses. Not the first, not the second is the bearer of this riddle, but the third. I would also say that this is once again a very important instance, based on the Trinitarian faith. Only in the fulfilment of this three-step: Father - Son - and now Holy Spirit. What is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is something immaterial, but it unlocks the meaning. The Holy Spirit is the instance of cognition. The feast of Pentecost allows the most diverse languages to suddenly recognise that all these languages coincide and that they suddenly - because they coincide - lead to understanding. The Holy Spirit is the agent that is able to lead us to meaning, to a meaning that does not come from us, but to a meaning that resonates within us.

Something begins to resonate within us, something that has come to us, something that we are now receiving. And that is why - I think - Frescobaldi very clearly anchored his riddle piece in the third of his organ masses, the *Messa della Madonna*, and for me you are the one who, to my complete astonishment and amazement, came up with a solution in one of our organ seminars in Würzburg that seems to me to be the valid solution, which I would never have expected, but which was the fruit of the reflections on the elements of the *Missa* made in this seminar. There we then reflected on the elements of the *Missa* in its most diverse manifestations, and then on the archetypal nature of the mystery and the enigma in the *Messa della Madonna*.

*Now come the healing of the Gentiles, the virgin child  
recognised, of whom all the world marvels, God has ordered  
such a birth for him.*

**MS:** Exactly. Let me try to summarise Bach's work very briefly before we come to one of Bach's most important role models, Girolamo Frescobaldi, whose notes - the *Fiori musicali* - Bach copied. The order of the material of tones and the *interrelationship* of intervals now correlate due to the ambiguity or the

'Ambiguity' of the material with various basic theological statements. These then enter into a relationship in various forms. Of course, something like this is not only defined once for a piece, but it is quite clear: if I do this material work, if I really create my material from 12 or more notes [with enharmonic mix-ups], then this is a kind of *language musicale*, as we find again and again with composers, i.e. the premise of how my work functions in its basic features - and that is highly exciting. Let's take a closer look at the *Fiori musicali* to make this train of thought really comprehensible: There are such incredibly strange things in these *Fiori musicali* - as is usual with Frescobaldi.

**MS:** In the very first mass - *Messa della Domenica* - there are basically no real irregularities:

- at the beginning a Toccat a<sup>1</sup>;
- the Kyrie verses;
- the canzona after the reading;
- a ricercar after the Credo, i.e. to the offertory;
- the fixed elevation toccata;
- a canzona after the distribution of communion.

So they are all pieces that always have their fixed places in the liturgy.

The Second Mass - *Messa della Apostoli*

- Toccata for the prelude;
- Kyrie-Versetten;
- Canzona after the reading;
- Now again a ricercar after the Credo to the offertory, preceded by a toccata. This is nothing special, but the preceding toccata already charges this ricercar.
- Then comes an alternative ricercar;
- again the Elevationstoccata;
- Once again, a ricercar as music that is apparently already searching for localisation, or at least - I believe - gradually bursting the boundaries of the church service. It is not a problem to play this music at the liturgical moments, but it still goes beyond the time frame in a certain way;
- This is followed by a canzona after communion.

Now we've reached the third mass - *Messa della Madonna* - and it gets even more bizarre.

- Toccata for the prelude;
- Kyrie-Versetten;
- Canzona after the reading;
- Ricercar to the offertory;
- Now suddenly there is a toccata and a ricercar, both of which simply have no place;
- This is immediately followed by the Elevation Stoccata.

[ - To conclude the mass follow a) *Bergamasca*, b) *Capriccio sopra la Girolmeta*; (see below)].

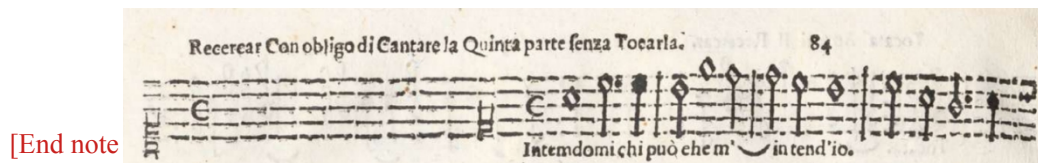
So where can the *Tocata* and the 'Rätsel-Ricercar' (*Recercar Con obbligo di Cantare la Quinta parte senza Tocarla*) be performed in a church service? There is simply no localisation, the offertory is over, the Elevation is still to come. At the same time, it is a 'riddle ricercar'; a fifth voice is to be sung in triple metre in a piece in duple metre - this *coincidentia oppositorum* of three and two is also interesting. Frescobaldi writes: "*Understand me, who can, I understand myself.*"

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1 Frescobaldi writes Toccata and Capriccio with a 'c' as *Tocata and Capriccio* respectively.

### Note 3

The words "*Intendomi chi può che m'in tend'io*"<sup>2</sup> [*Understand me, who can, I understand myself*] as Frescobaldi's epigraph to his riddle ricercar of the *Messa della Madonna* refer to a word in Francesco Petrarca (1304 - 1374), *Il Canzoniere* - Canzone 105).



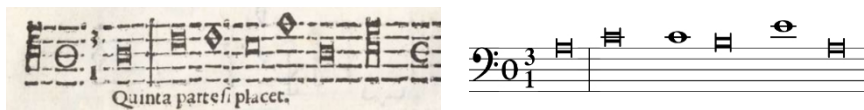
[End note

**MS:** The first big question is which text I should sing to, the second big question with this piece is when and where in the piece? My idea was relatively simple at first.

04:14

Using the Latin text of the liturgy, I look for possibilities of where and with which text I can provide this voice:

**NB 1:**



The interesting thing was that there was only one option in the end. This was in the middle of the preface. [CB:] So you're looking for words that have six syllables, [MS:] that also work that way in terms of stress, [CB:] and that also say something essential in their meaning. [MS:] I didn't even have to do that. [in dialogue:] I didn't have to look for the meaning, there was only this one possibility [CB:] these six tones with this emphasis. [MS:] That was the only possibility and so I was suddenly at the sentence about the lamb: *Dignum et justum est* - "it is worthy and just". Then that is already a special localisation of the whole thing.

### Note 4

Music example as the solution to the riddle set by Frescobaldi:

Frescobaldi's specific:



The words  
Liturgical

*Dignum et justum est*  
place After the Credo - before the Elevation  
ergo: In the preface to the Sanctus

The only words that form a closed context, count six syllables and fit the stress pattern are within the preface:

*Dignum et justum* it is worthy and just  
as a central statement about Christ, the Lamb of God

Musical place

Realisation not in triplets, but in 3 + 2 + 1 + 2 + 1 + 3 half notes: 5 bars before the end, beginning on the second half note of the 'Rätsel-Ricercar'. [End note 4]

<sup>2</sup> Obvious spelling mistake; in Petrarch it reads: "*Intendomi [...]*" and not "*Intemdomi*".

**MS:** Now to its location in the piece: you could ask again about the "where" and there are numerous possibilities. However, if I don't want to play it as a triplet, but let the half note continue as a connecting element, there is only one place in this piece where this is possible.<sup>3</sup> This is actually at the end of the piece - I play a little ahead:

**NB 2**

The image shows a musical score for organ. The top staff is a vocal line with lyrics: "Dig - num et ju - stum est". The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment. A downward arrow points to a specific note in the vocal line, which is a half note. The score is in a key with one sharp (F#) and a common time signature.

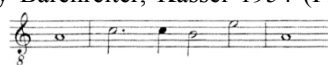
**MS:** To finish that briefly - [CB:] Then comes the Elevation. [MS:] And there's another little highlight: not only does the *Bergamasca* follow, which basically replaces the *Canzona* at the end of the *Missa*, but also the *Capriccio sopra la Girolmeta*. This is a breach of the rules par excellence, with which Frescobaldi, as organist in St Peter's Basilica, resolutely opposes the *Tridentine Council*. He opposes the ban on adapting folk songs in the church; certainly with the idea of saying that the primal human - especially in the *stylus phantasticus* - the broken, the real experience is not something outside the church, because it belongs to my artistic self-image. It was certainly an extremely important point for subsequent generations that Frescobaldi offered an alternative here with the *Bergamasca* and the concluding *Capriccio*. At least I think that as a 'rule-breaker' he was able to do this.

**CB:** The liturgical place between the end of the Credo and the beginning of the Consecration, the beginning of the Elevation, is precisely the Preface to the Sanctus and then the Sanctus; the rule is broken by the fact that Frescobaldi intends music here that is not intended in the liturgy, [MS:] that is not even conceivable to be played in reality. It is completely hypothetical, utopian, that this music can actually be heard in a *missa*. [CB:] So it is an imagination of a musical event, which is then exaggerated by the enigma - exaggerated by the fact that this work was a teaching work for organists.

What lesson do you draw from this when you become aware of the enigma of music that has no place in the *Missa*? So it can really only arise in the imagination or - alternatively - in my own devotion, by playing this music at some point and singing to it. And then something fulfils itself in this personal devotion that is added to the public performance of the *Missa*, so to speak - my own devotion. This is actually a confession about the individual as the addressee of all this.

**MS:** It's a modernity that Frescobaldi contrasts with his employer here, which is something that so many people at the time actually had.

3 In the edition by Pierre Pidoux (1905-2001), published by Bärenreiter, Kassel 1954 (Plate BA 2205), the fifth voice is suggested as being in a duple metre and located in eight different places (p. 55f.)



Let us perhaps put it this way with regard to the *visibilium et invisibilium*: Here, too, we find this separation again - if one can speak of a separation, for here the *invisibilium* is expressed by this particular localisation of the enigma-ricercar.

**CB:** Now the bridge to Johann Sebastian Bach - initially via an 'intermediate station':  
The beginning of Frescobaldi's ricercar reads:

10:43



I see a transposition to an 'impossible' place in the key of C sharp minor as an 'intermediate station':



We heard the Fuga in C sharp minor from *Ariadne musica* by Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer.

The next step: Bach's Well-Tempered *Clavier* draws on the progression of keys that Fischer had created, as well as the sequence of preludes and fugues. Bach develops *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier* Part I from this. Bach must have come across the riddle in the copy of the *Fiori musicali* and - due to the connection of his WKI to Fischer - he must have come across the fugue in C sharp minor and thus must have recognised that this fugue is a transposition of the 'impossible place' of the *tocata* and the enigmatic ricercar in Frescobaldi, so that this topos now returns in the 'impossible place' of the key of C sharp minor, which - on the harpsichord certainly - has not yet found a place on the organ. Bach now reacts to this - in my opinion - on the one hand by composing the WKI, but on the other hand by the following: I play the beginning of the *Tocata Avanti Il Recercar* by Frescobaldi, which introduces the Ricercar:



Now the composition by Bach that I suspect is the answer:



*Nun komm der Heyden Heilandt, der Jungfrauen Kind erkennt* versus *Messa della Madonna*.

So we encounter the imagined place of devotion that *has no room in the inn*. This becomes piece 1 of Bach's *Orgelbüchlein*. A utopia becomes the starting point of the *Orgelbüchlein*.

Now we have to ask: how modern is Frescobaldi, how modern is Fischer, how modern is Johann Sebastian Bach? They are extremely modern. They believe in utopia, but this happens in the

understanding of the *invisibilium* within the *visibilium*. And in doing so, they pay homage to the third person that we confess in the Creed: The *Holy Spirit*.

**MS:** And in my opinion, they clearly formulate the demand on the individual to really rub up against things, to grapple with them, to doubt; to create places of doubt - places of the individual, in order to encounter even greater riddles from there. And then the riddle is the formulation. Because one thing is absolutely clear: only I can experience the mystery and the enigma, the mystical, with myself. It is rarely the case that I am served this from the outside. It basically doesn't work because it's inside me and often remains invisible. In other words, what Frescobaldi - perhaps the first to do so? - sees as a necessity when dealing with a clearly defined framework, a liturgy, is to involve oneself as an artistic personality: "*I have a voice as an individual in this context*" and that certainly sets an example.

**CB:** And now you have - I think - travelled a very similar path in your search for the place between Credo and Elevation by coming across *Dignum est justum est* as a utopia, just as I was faced with the question at the time - I now trust myself to be able to make statements about the fundamental tone order in *ClavierÜbung* III [...].

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Digitisation, networking and mediation in the  
teaching of international organ art

***DVVLIO***

Third-party funded project at the  
Würzburg University of Music

Supported by the Foundation for  
Innovation in University Teaching

Hochschule  
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university of music



Stiftung  
Innovation in der  
Hochschullehre