

Froberger in Rome: From Frescobaldi's Craftsmanship to Kircher's Compositional Secrets*

By Claudio Annibaldi

If the lack of information on Froberger's life is undeniable, so too is the lack of scholarly research in this area. Indeed, all the documents concerning his two visits to Rome were found accidentally by scholars researching other subjects. One such example is the financial records testifying to Froberger's service at the Viennese court. What has enabled reference books to tell us that he studied in Rome with Frescobaldi between September 1637 and April 1641 is the disappearance of his name from the Viennese records during that time.¹ However, the records in question were discovered more than a century ago, not by a Froberger biographer but by a scholar researching the history of the imperial music chapel in Vienna—Ludwig von Köchel, author of the Mozart catalogue.² Another example is the two extant letters from Froberger to Athanasius Kircher, a learned German Jesuit living in Rome who included Froberger's fantasy *super ut re mi fa sol la* for harpsichord in his gigantic musical treatise *Musurgia universalis* (1650).³ From a biographical standpoint, these letters

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¹ See e.g. the Froberger entry for *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie 6 (London: Macmillan, 1980), 859.

² Ludwig von Köchel, *Die kaiserliche Hof-Musikkappelle in Wien von 1543 bis 1867 nach urkundlichen Forschungen* (Vienna: Beck'sche Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1869; rpt Hildesheim: Olms, 1976), 58.

³ This fantasy, which was the only piece of Froberger's published during the composer's lifetime, appeared in Athanasius Kircher, *Musurgia universalis sive Ars magna consoni et dissoni* (Rome: Corbelletti-Grignani, 1650), rpt ed., Ulf Scharlau 1 (Hildesheim: Olms, 1970), 466–75. The encyclopedic contents of the ten books into which Kircher divided his treatise are detailed in Scharlau's foreword to the facsimile edition, particularly pp. iv–x. Partial transcription and photographic reproduction of the two letters are included in Scharlau, "Neue

are of critical importance, as they testify that another extended absence of the musician from the imperial music chapel between October 1645 and April 1653 included many trips to Italy, Germany, France, England, and the Netherlands and that one of these journeys led him back to Rome before September 1649. These letters, however, were discovered and first interpreted by a scholar interested not in Froberger's life but in Kircher's theories of music—Ulf Scharlau—who concluded from the first letter, if with some caution, that Froberger spent his second stay in the papal city studying with Giacomo Carissimi, an interpretation that has been adopted in a number of summaries of Froberger's life in dictionaries, monographs, and editions of his music.⁴

The present study aims to ascertain, through Roman archival sources, whether Froberger actually studied with Frescobaldi in 1637–41 and with Carissimi in 1645–49. On one hand, in fact, thus far we have lacked any evidence verifying Froberger's presence in Rome before Frescobaldi's death in 1643. The Viennese sources testify only that the former was allowed to go to Rome to study with the latter, not that the teaching in fact ever took place; nor can hard evidence be found in the well-known passage from Kircher's *Musurgia* in which Froberger is mentioned as "an organist of the Emperor and a former student of the famous organist Girolamo Frescobaldi," for the *Musurgia* was written almost a decade later—after Froberger's second visit to Rome in the late 1640s.⁵ On the other hand, an apprenticeship with Frescobaldi is thoroughly consistent with Froberger's career as virtuoso keyboard player and composer of instrumental music, whereas an apprenticeship with a master of the Roman oratorio such as Carissimi would be inconsistent with not only his career and musical output but also the long-standing separation of vocal and instrumental music.⁶

Quellenfunde zur Biographie Johann Jakob Frobergers," *Die Musikforschung* 22 (1969): 47–52, and Athanasius Kircher (1601–1680) als Musikschristensteller. Ein Beitrag zur Musikanschauung des Barock (Marburg: Görlich & Weiershäuser, 1969), 348, 350–51, tables 16a–b, 17a–c. For a full transcription and facsimile reproduction, see Howard M. Schott, "A Critical Edition of the Works of J. J. Froberger with Commentary" (Ph.D. diss., University of Oxford, 1977), 85–98.

⁴ Scharlau, "Neue Quellenfunde," 50–51, and Athanasius Kircher, 39, 335, 550–51. Scharlau's hypothesis has been adopted in Buelow's Froberger entry for *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, p. 839; in Henning Siedentopf, *Johann Jakob Froberger. Leben und Werk* (Stuttgart: Stuttgarter Verlagskontor, 1977), 15; and in Froberger, *Oeuvres complètes pour le clavecin*, ed. Howard Schott 1 (Paris: Heugel, 1988), iii, vi, x.

⁵ Kircher, *Musurgia*, I: 465.

⁶ On the origin of this separation, which continued through the Middle Ages and Renaissance into the Baroque period, see the excerpts from Aristotle's *Politics* and Boethius's *De institutione musica*, translated in Oliver Strunk, ed., *Source Readings in Music History* (rpt ed., London: Faber & Faber, 1981), 17, 21, 85–86.

I first studied two series of manuscript sources, each covering the years 1637–41 and 1645–49, and integrated the data of one series with those of the other. I perused the *avvisi di Roma*, the semiweekly newsletters from Rome sent by specialized reporters to important clients in Italy and abroad, and the so-called *stati d'anime*, the sketchy volumes in which the Roman parish priests recorded the inhabitants of their districts each Lent.⁷ I then collated two sets of musical compositions in order to document the possible stylistic influences during his first Roman stay: his autograph keyboard pieces located in the Nationalbibliothek, Vienna,⁸ and the Chigi keyboard tablatures in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome (a set of manuscript volumes deriving from the legacy of Frescobaldi's student Leonardo Castellani, which includes pieces composed by the master for teaching purposes).⁹ Finally, I went through two additional archival sources in an attempt to document Froberger's relationships with Carissimi and Kircher during his second visit to Rome—the small Carissimi archive and the letters of Kircher, which are held, respectively, in the Roman archives of the Pontificio Collegio Germanico Ungarico de Urbe and the Pontificia Università Gregoriana. As I had foreseen, I found no reference to Froberger in the former source, but my findings in the latter led me to a thorough revision of the current hypothesis on Froberger's apprenticeship with Carissimi.

⁷ I did not peruse the *stati d'anime* of 1637, because in Lent 1637 Froberger was still in Vienna. I did, however, peruse the *stati d'anime* of 1641, because Easter that year fell on 31 March, and he could well have been in Rome during Lent before returning to Vienna in April.

⁸ See the facsimile reproduction of *A-Wn*, Mus. Hss. 165560, 18706, and 18707 in *17th-Century Keyboard Music*, vol. 3, ed. Robert Hill (New York: Garland, 1988). Modern editions are available in Froberger, *Orgel- und Klavierwerke*, ed. Guido Adler (Vienna: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1893–1903; rpt. Graz: Akademisch Druck- & Verlagsanstalt, 1959), and in Schott's edition cited in n. 4 above. The verity of the autograph of the Viennese manuscripts has been deduced so far from secondary details, such as the locution "by his own hand" ("manu propria") appearing at the end of most pieces.

⁹ See the facsimile reproduction of these invaluable sources in *17th-Century Keyboard Music*, vols. 1 and 15, ed. Alexander Silbiger (New York: Garland, 1988–89). Modern editions of many pieces are included in Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Keyboard Compositions Preserved in Manuscript*, ed. Richard W. Shindle (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1968), and in *Seventeenth-Century Keyboard Music in the Chigi Manuscripts of the Vatican Library*, ed. Harry B. Lincoln (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1968). For a reconstruction and history of the Castellani archive, see Claudio Annibaldi, "Musical Autographs of Frescobaldi and His Entourage in Roman Sources," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 43, no. 3 (1990): 393–425.

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Froberger's wish to study with Frescobaldi in Rome is made apparent by a detailed account of the conversations that the *Obersthofmeister* of Emperor Ferdinand III had in June 1637 with two personages of the imperial court in Vienna—Father Johannes Gans, the emperor's confessor, and Duke Federico Savelli, a Roman nobleman who in 1641 would succeed Prince Scipione Gonzaga as imperial ambassador to the pope.¹⁰ Father Gans was required by the *Obersthofmeister* to try to convert Froberger to Catholicism, and he soon began this attempt.¹¹ Duke Savelli was asked for information on two practical matters—how to pay Frescobaldi for his lessons to Froberger, and where the latter could be lodged in Rome. The duke's answer to the first question is somewhat uncertain: he suggests that Frescobaldi would be content with periodically receiving a gift from the emperor but offers to write to his nephew in Rome, Prince Paolo Savelli, asking him to arrange a more suitable agreement with the master. The duke's answer to the second question is more precise: Froberger's lodging in Rome might be supplied by Frescobaldi, Prince Gonzaga, or the Savelli, if the ambassador's household could not accommodate him.

The *stati d'anime* of the parish of San Lorenzo ai Monti, which recorded Frescobaldi's family in 1638–41, do not include names of any of his students,¹² and the *stati d'anime* of San Nicola in Carcere, the parish of the

¹⁰ The document, which is held in the Vienna State Archive, has been published in La Mara [Marie Lipsius], *Musiker Briefe aus fünf Jahrhunderten nach den Urhandschriften erstmalig herausgegeben (. . .) mit den Namenszügen der Künstler* 1 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1886), 107; Paul Nettel, "Zur Geschichte der kaiserlichen Hofmusikkappelle von 1636–1680," *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft* 16 (1929): 74; Herwig Knaus, *Der Musiker im Archivbestand des kaiserlichen Obersthofmeisteramtes (1637–1705)* 1 (Vienna: Böhlhaus, 1967), 90–91.

¹¹ According to the Froberger entry for *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Allgemeine Enzyklopedie der Musik*, ed. Friedrich Blume 4 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1955), 985, the musician's conversion to Catholicism was a condition for his obtaining a leave to go to Rome and may well have been accomplished there. This assumption, however, has no support but the well-known anecdote told in Johann Mattheson, *Grundlage einer Ehren-Pforte* (Hamburg: Mattheson, 1740; rpt. ed. Max Schneider, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1969), 87–88, where Froberger's conversion is ascribed to "N. Kappeler," a German musician who would have been among his comrades in study in Rome. Furthermore, no "Kappeler" is recorded in the surviving archival sources concerning the German community in seventeenth-century Rome, such as those held in the archive of Santa Maria dell'Anima (a church near Piazza Navona, that enjoyed for centuries the emperors' protection as the national German church in Rome), which I was able to consult thanks to the courtesy of Dr. Johannes Nedbal, rector of the church, and of the archivist Mrs. Hildegard Speciale.

¹² Frederick Hammond, *Girolamo Frescobaldi* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 81.

Savelli palace at the Teatro Marcello, seem to be lost. I therefore focused on Prince Gonzaga's palace, whose location in Piazza Navona is testified by an *avviso di Roma* of January 1640 concerning the wedding of the prince and a Roman widow,¹³ and I succeeded in both identifying the palace with a building that still exists in this famous square (figures 1 and 2)¹⁴ and discovering in the *stati d'anime* of a church nearby a 1640 list of residents in the imperial ambassador's palace, which includes a "signor Giovan Jacomo from Germany," who is most likely Johann Jakob Froberger.¹⁵

I then sought to reconstruct some of the musical events that Froberger might have attended in Rome in 1640. The *avvisi* reporting on Prince Gonzaga's wedding mention a concert that took place on 1 January 1640 in honor of the married couple.¹⁶ Although they mention only the hiring of the celebrated sopranos Loreto Vittori and Marc'Antonio Pasqualini, the reference to "various symphonies of sound" ("varie sinfonie di suoni")—a phrase usually referring to instrumental music—suggests that the concert included a number of instrumentalists. If so, it is possible that Froberger, a virtuoso player as well as a member of the bridegroom's household, not only attended the concert but also participated in it.

More certain is his attendance at Frescobaldi's performances, which in 1640 included the weekly services of the musical chapel of San Pietro in Vaticano as well as the Lenten oratorios patronized by the Arciconfraternita del Santissimo Crocifisso. The importance of the art of improvisation for any instrumentalist of the time, as well as the well-known ability of Frescobaldi in such an art, suggests strongly that attending his performances was a part of Froberger's apprenticeship with the master. Indeed, André Maugars, a French viola player who heard Frescobaldi improvising at the Crocifisso oratorios during these very years, wrote enthusiastically that all French organists should come to Rome to listen to his improvised toccatas "full of contrapuntal devices and admirable inventions."¹⁷

¹³ *I-Rvat*, Ottob. lat. 3342, fol. 2v.

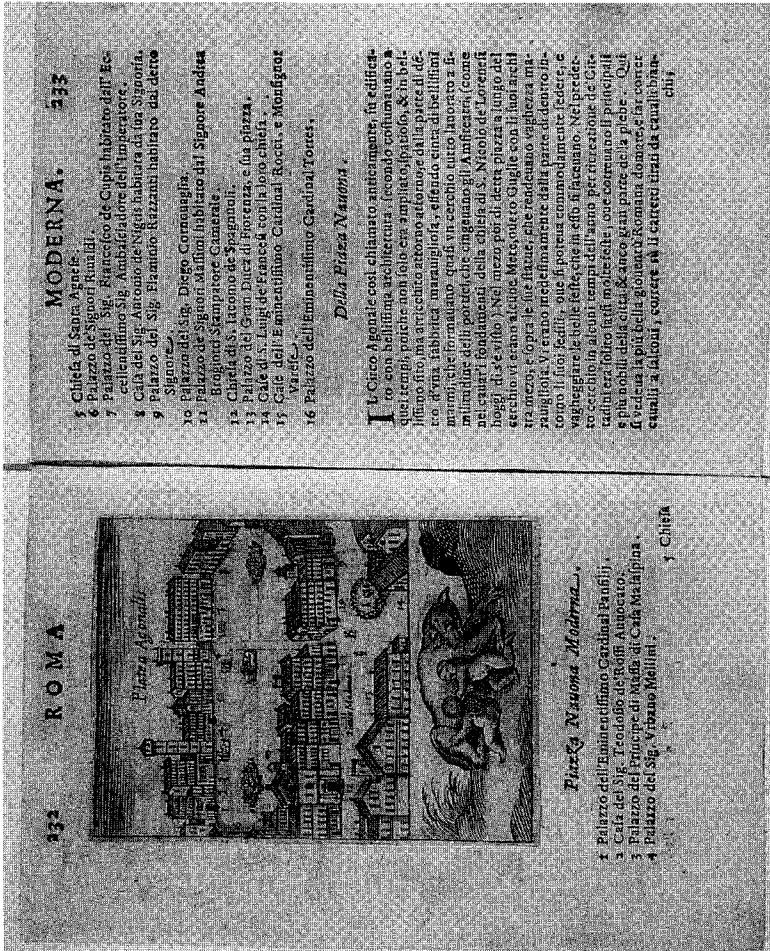
¹⁴ The feature that enabled me to locate the Gonzaga palace in modern Piazza Navona was the covered balcony that has distinguished the building from the surrounding ones since the seventeenth century. See *Piazza Navona. Isola dei Pamphili* (Rome: Spada, 1978), 247–67.

¹⁵ Rome, Archivio storico del Vicariato, S. Biagio della Fossa, St. d'An. 8 (1633–40), fols. 104–05. The volume also contains the lists of the residents in the ambassador's palace during Lent in 1639 and in 1641, but neither mentions any "signor Giovan Jacomo tedesco." It should be noted, however, that the ambassador left Rome after Easter 1640. Thus, the list of 1641 concerns only the entourage of his wife. The loss of the *stati d'anime* of San Nicola in Carcere precludes us from excluding the possibility that at some time around Lent 1640 Froberger had dwelt in the Savelli palace at the Teatro Marcello.

¹⁶ *I-Rvat*, Ottob. lat. 3342, fols. 10–10v (undated).

¹⁷ Hammond, *Frescobaldi*, 91–92.

Figure 1: An engraving of Piazza Navona, Rome, in the 1630s along with the relevant caption describing the building no. 7 as Francesco De Cupis's palace, which was rented by the imperial ambassador to the pope (photograph by the Biblioteca Vaticana from Pompilio Totti, *Ritratto di Roma moderna* [Rome: Mascardi, 1638], 232–33)



We can gain further insight into Frescobaldi's relationship with his students in general and with Froberger in particular from the financial records of 1640 for San Pietro in Vaticano and the Crocifisso—especially those referring to musical events requiring more than one keyboard player, such as the magnificent music for five choruses that was performed in San

Figure 2: A view of Piazza Navona, Rome, in 1990. On the right, the fifteenth-century De Cupis palace (photograph by Marzio Marzot)



Pietro on 29 June, festival day of St. Peter and St. Paul.¹⁸ In such cases, Frescobaldi played with one or more of six organists and harpsichordists—Castellani, Alessandro Costantini, Giovan Battista Ferrini, Margarino, Francesco Mutij, and Pellegrino Scacchi—whom Froberger was most likely to have met or at least heard during his first visit to Rome. As three of them (Castellani, Ferrini, and Mutij) are associated with the master as composers or scribes of the Chigi tablatures, these sources may be regarded as an example of the repertoires assimilated by Froberger during the years in question.¹⁹

Particularly relevant to his apprenticeship with Frescobaldi is the Chigi tablature Q.IV.25, the title page of which reads *Sonate d'intavolatura del signor Girolamo Frescobaldi* and which was apparently used by the master at the end of the 1630s.²⁰ Probably compiled by Nicolò Borboni—a former student of Frescobaldi and the engraver of his two books of toccatas—the volume consists of several independent sections, the last of which includes one musical example written by Frescobaldi for teaching purposes and three toccatas.²¹ The strong affinities of these pieces with Froberger's style has led some scholars to claim his authorship for at least one of them.²²

¹⁸ *I-Rvat*, Archivio del Capitolo di S.Pietro. Cappella Giulia, 93, fol. 66r. For Frescobaldi's performances at the Crocifisso during Lent 1640, see Rome, Archivio segreto vaticano, Archivio del Crocifisso, F.XIX.26 (item not numbered, headed "Musici pagati da me Jac.o Rubieri secr.o li Venerdi di Quadragesima per la musica fatta nel Oratorio del S.mo Crocifisso"). On the musicians hired for these performances, see Hammond, *Frescobaldi*, 90.

¹⁹ Annibaldi, "Musical Autographs of Frescobaldi and His Entourage in Roman Sources," 405.

²⁰ For the facsimile edition, see the first volume of *17th-Century Keyboard Music* mentioned in n. 9 above. I identified the hands recurring in this source as those of Frescobaldi, his son Domenico, and Nicolò Borboni in "Ancora sulle messe attribuite a Frescobaldi: proposta di un profittevole scambio," in *Girolamo Frescobaldi nel IV centenario della nascita*, ed. Sergio Durante and Dinko Fabris (Florence: Olschki, 1986), 125–50.

²¹ For a reproduction of Frescobaldi's autograph page, see Annibaldi, "Musical Autographs," 397 (table 2). On the dating of the volume from circa 1638–41, see idem, "Ancora sulle messe," 135–36. On Borboni's apprenticeship with Frescobaldi, see Arnaldo Morelli, "Nuovi documenti frescobaldiani: i contratti per l'edizione del primo libro di *Toccate*," *Studi musicali* 17 (1988), 257–58.

²² Gustav Leonhardt, "Johann Jacob Froberger and His Music," *L'organo* 6 (1968): 28; Silbiger, *Italian Manuscript Sources of 17th-Century Keyboard Music* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980), 164, and "The Roman Frescobaldi Tradition c. 1640–1670," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 33, no. 1 (1980): 68. In his introduction to *17th-Century Keyboard Music*, vol. 1, chap. 11–13, and "Tracing the Contents of Froberger's Lost Autographs," *Current Musicology* 54 (1993): 20–21, Silbiger has reevaluated the authorship of Frescobaldi, though not excluding that of Borboni's as suggested by my identification of the latter's hand in the source in question (see n. 20 above).

The point, however, is that, from an analytical standpoint, such toccatas cannot be regarded as free toccatas in the style of those included by Frescobaldi in his printed books, but rather cantus-firmus toccatas, like those included by the master in the Chigi tablature Q.IV.19 as well as by Froberger in the autograph volumes of 1649 and 1656.²³ These analytical remarks seem to confirm a hypothesis that I have made elsewhere: that Frescobaldi's relationships with his students were based on the transmission of models inspired not from the idiosyncratic pieces gathered in his printed books but from the teaching tradition of the North Italian organ school, which valued the craftsmanship required for more standardized models such as those based on the cantus-firmus technique.²⁴ If this is correct, it seems likely that the reason for the lack of information on Froberger's first visit to Rome is not only the lack of initiative of his biographers but also, indirectly, Frescobaldi's teaching method, the nature of which allowed it to be assimilated rapidly by his more gifted and experienced students, as Froberger undoubtedly was. In other words, if the only purpose of Froberger's first visit to Rome was to study with Frescobaldi, his apprenticeship probably lasted far less than the four-year period suggested by the payrolls of the imperial chapel in Vienna—which has thus far been taken for fact by most biographers of each of the two musicians.

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The supposition that Froberger's stays in Rome coincided exactly with the gaps of the payrolls of the Viennese court is even more doubtful in regard to his second stay. His name disappears from the payrolls beginning in October 1645, and his first letter to Kircher, which was written on 18 September 1649 from Vienna, testifies that three years later Froberger

²³ On Froberger, see Murray C. Bradshaw, *The Origin of the Toccata* (n.p.: American Musicological Institute, 1972), 79–81. On Frescobaldi, see Annibaldi, "La didattica del solco tracciato: il codice chigiano Q.IV.29 da *Klavierbüchlein* d'ignoti a prima fonte frescobaldiana autografa," *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 20 (1985): 70–71. Here I rely on Bradshaw's notion of a silent, or ideal, cantus firmus—that is, a melody derived from a psalm tone that underlies a toccata throughout without being incorporated there in any material fashion. This notion is somewhat controversial—see the objections of Silbiger and Frits Noske in, respectively, *Italian Manuscript Sources*, 191–92 (n. 1 and n. 4) and *Sweelinck* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 103—but it is still the only analytical approach able to explain "works that otherwise seem to have little sense to twentieth-century observers," as Vincent J. Panetta has put it in "Hans Leo Hassler and the Keyboard Toccata: Antecedents, Sources, Style" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1991), 32

²⁴ Annibaldi, "La didattica del solco tracciato," 81–82.

had already returned home. I could find no sure evidence for his stay in Rome in the *avvisi di Roma* or the surviving *stati d'anime* for the years 1645–49. However, there is a remote possibility that a “Giovanni from Germany, 40 years old” and a “Giovan Giacomo brother, 42 years old,” recorded during Lent in 1647 by the parish priest of Santa Lucia della Tinta in a hotel near Piazza Navona, were Froberger and his elder brother Johann Christoph.²⁵ On one hand, seventeenth-century *stati d'anime* were notoriously unreliable regarding age (that here Johann Jakob Froberger, born in 1616, may have been reported ten years older would recall the miscalculations of the age of Frescobaldi in some *stati d'anime* by more than ten years);²⁶ on the other hand, although in 1647 Johann Christoph Froberger served the Stuttgart Hofkapelle, his name does not appear in the relevant payrolls before 31 May.²⁷ Because Easter was the last day the inhabitants of Rome could be recorded in the *stati d'anime*, and Easter fell on 20 April that year, he could well have stayed in Rome until 20 April 1647 and returned to Stuttgart by the end of the following month.

More reliable evidence of Froberger's presence in the papal city during those years is a letter written to Kircher by the emperor's confessor, Father Johannes Gans, on 9 February 1649 urging the delivery, “even without Mr. Froberger,” of a “musical box,” for which Ferdinand III was eagerly waiting.²⁸ Scharlau points out that the box in question was a device for automatic composition that was described in the *Musurgia universalis*,²⁹ and he supports this claim with the quotation of the letter that the musician wrote to Kircher September 18 of the same year, reporting on his arrival at the imperial court, his two-hour meeting with the emperor, and the emperor's immediate attempts to compose music through Kircher's machine. The relevant passage, transcribed by Scharlau, reads:

²⁵ Archivio storico del Vicariato, S. Lucia della Tinta, St.d'An. (1642–48), sub anno, item no. 6.

²⁶ For example, in 1635 he was said to be forty years old instead of fifty-two, in 1636 forty-eight instead of fifty-three, in 1638 forty instead of fifty-five, and so on. See Archivio Storico del Vicariato, S.Lorenzo ai Monti, St.d'An. (1634–49), sub anno, nos. 71, 64, and 207, respectively.

²⁷ See Gustav Bossert, “Die Hofkapelle unter Eberhard III. 1528–1657. Die Zeit des Wiedergangs, der Auflösung und der ersten Versuche der Wiederherstellung,” *Württembergische Vierteljahrshefte für Landesgeschichte*, new series 21 (1912): 121.

²⁸ Scharlau, “Neue Quellenfunde,” 50, and idem, *Athanasius Kircher*, 348.

²⁹ For Kircher's theory of automatic composition, which was obviously based on combinatory principles, and for its aim to enable the missionaries of the Jesuit to set to music religious texts in any language, see Scharlau, *Athanasius Kircher*, 202–12, and Carlo Maria Chierotti, “La *musurgia mirifica* di Athanasius Kircher. La composizione musicale alla portata di tutti nell'età barocca,” *Musica/Realtà* 13, no. 37 (1992): 107–23.

The Father Gans brought [the machine] to His Majesty and His Majesty sent for me. I then showed His Majesty how it is to be understood. The Emperor, however, soon grasped and understood it, and also immediately composed a number of things out of it, and was greatly delighted. Finally, after the second hour, the Emperor said to me, I should now just go home; he would send for me again the next day.³⁰

Scharlau concludes that Froberger was already in Rome when Gans wrote Kircher the letter of the preceding February, and speculates that he was there to study with Carissimi. To support this further claim, the scholar cites two passages from Froberger's letter to Kircher mentioned above in which Carissimi is mentioned not by name but as the "master of Sant'Apollinare," interpreting this appellation as evidence that Froberger studied with him.³¹ However, this view is untenable for a number of reasons: (1) the appellation in question was merely due to Carissimi's status as the musical master of the church of Sant'Apollinare, which was attached to the Jesuitic Collegio Germanico Ungarico in Rome; (2) he is cited by Froberger in a context that suggests on the contrary (as we shall see below) that the latter was never a student of his; (3) there are two letters from Kircher's epistolary that escaped Scharlau suggesting that, during Froberger's second stay in Rome, he underwent a musical apprenticeship not with Carissimi but with Kircher himself. Let us consider first these letters thus far unknown to Froberger's biographers.

The earlier letter is from the above-mentioned Father Gans, who wrote it on 7 August 1649 from Vienna to inform Kircher of Froberger's meeting with the emperor on the preceding day:

I gave the Emperor the musical box, and he liked it. The courier [i.e., Froberger] instructed him for two hours but told me very little. The Emperor wants your Reverence to send some written instructions. I beg you to send good ones and a similar box for me.³²

³⁰ Scharlau, "Neue Quellenfunde," 48. All my quotations from Froberger's letters to Kircher closely follow an unpublished translation of Howard Schott, to whom I am indebted for sending me a copy of the typescript.

³¹ Scharlau, "Neue Quellenfunde," 50.

³² Carteggio kircheriano 561, fol. 137. The letter goes on to hint at the serious illness of the empress, who had just given birth to a child—an event that Froberger reports to Kircher as having occurred the day after his meeting with the emperor. This letter, as well as Schega's quoted below, is transcribed in the appendix of my "La macchina dei cinque stili: nuovi documenti sul secondo soggiorno romano di Johann Jakob Froberger," in *La musica a Roma attraverso le fonti d'archivio. Atti del convegno internazionale, Roma 4-7 June 1992*, ed. Bianca Maria Antolini, Arnaldo Morelli, and Vita Vera Spagnuolo (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1994), 399-408.

This report anticipates the one the musician gave to Kircher in his own letter of September 1649 and adds an interesting detail: the musical box Kircher sent to the emperor through Froberger was delivered by the latter without any written instructions on its use. The other letter is from Father Johannes Schega, the confessor of the emperor's brother, archduke Leopold Wilhelm, who was Froberger's patron and would soon become the dedicatee of the *Musurgia universalis*. Schega, who wrote to Kircher from France on 6 April 1649, deals chiefly with the printing of the treatise but ends with a sentence that both reveals that Froberger actually spent his second Roman stay in some kind of musical training and begins to suggest Kircher, if not as his master, as the man responsible for his apprenticeship:

I am delighted to know that the organist of his Serene [i.e., the archduke] is behaving so well in Rome and is making progress in the art of music. Give him my greetings.³³

This perspective becomes more definite if we eventually turn to Froberger's letter to Kircher of the following September and consider his reference to Carissimi in the original context rather than in the fragmentary (and somewhat inaccurate) transcription by Scharlau.³⁴ The passage in question reads:

Your Reverence will still be able to recall how I took leave of you. You led me into a room and showed me a secret, how to make a canon on the unison. I thought more about this secret on the journey and found it extraordinarily expedient but have to date revealed it to no one, and nobody will learn of it from me, as I promised you.

³³ Carteggio kircheriano 561, fol. 151.

³⁴ For example, Scharlau mistranslates "Kestel" (box) and "regaliert" (rewarded with some gift) as "Retsel" (*Rätsel*, riddle) and "regalist" (player of the regale-type organ). As a consequence, the passage in which Froberger reports that on his way from Rome to Vienna he stopped twice to illustrate Kircher's machine to the grand duke of Tuscany and the duke of Mantua, and that he was consequently rewarded with some gift, is misconstrued, as if in Florence and Mantua Froberger performed on the organ for the above-mentioned princes and demonstrated for them an undefined device related to Kircher's theory of automatic composition. Moreover, Scharlau misidentifies an Italian nobleman met by Froberger in Florence (prince Leopoldo de' Medici, brother of the grand duke of Tuscany) as archduke Leopold Wilhelm, assuming that the latter arrived in Italy in early 1649 and that Froberger was a member of his entourage (see Scharlau, *Athanasius Kircher*, 348). The latter assumption is contradicted by epistolary evidence on the presence of the archduke in Brussels.

Today I composed a psalm in which three sopranos can sing from one part. I diligently put the *basso continuo* under it, in order that it should not be too easy to understand. You can have it tried out at Sant'Apollinare, but do not leave a copy in anyone's hand, such that it would become common [knowledge]. I am anxious to know what the master of Sant'Apollinare will say to this. I therefore eagerly await an answer. If Your Reverence had confided such a secret to me earlier, then I could have pushed myself further, so that the box would have been much better equipped [with compositional devices]. However, nothing was lost [by this]. I have already had thoughts of a new box that will make a much better effect. In time I shall send Your Reverence one such box. But I still have one more request to make of Your Reverence: could you by mathematics invent a canon, not on the unison but rather on the fifth below and fourth above, thus in four [parts]? No composer in the world has ever enjoyed the revelation of such a thing. If Your Reverence could send it to me I would remain forever in your debt for life.³⁵

The closing of the letter returns to this last request: "I ask Your Reverence once again for the other secret, but send me an example with it as well and explain it very clearly so that I could understand it." Then Froberger adds two postscripts. The first, omitted in Scharlau's transcription, shows Froberger's concern that other people not see Kircher's answer: "Your Reverence should not enclose this letter with the one to Father Gans, but rather address it to me directly." The second postscript, quoted by Scharlau without the last sentence, concerns again the score sent to Kircher: "I have intentionally not written out this psalm in my own hand, for then it would be known that I composed it. Your Reverence can say that you did it."³⁶

Can we continue, then, to entertain the hypothesis that Froberger studied with Carissimi on the basis of this letter alone, as it seems Scharlau would have it? I think not. First of all, Froberger's psalm was but an application of a canonic technique Kircher had taught him during their last meeting in Rome. It is most unlikely that Carissimi would be used to test the effectiveness of a piece that one of his students composed following the teachings of another master. Second, Froberger's suggestion to Kircher that the psalm be rehearsed at Sant'Apollinare was probably motivated by a practical consideration—that the singers of the church attached

³⁵ Carteggio kircheriano 557b, fol. 305v.

³⁶ Carteggio kircheriano 557b, fol. 306.

to the Collegio Germanico Ungarico would be those most available to a German Jesuit living in Rome. Third, even if consultation with Carissimi, as master of Sant'Apollinare, would have increased the value of such an experiment, it appears that Kircher's judgment was more important to Froberger. The experiment originated from Kircher himself, and—as a subsequent passage of the letter reveals—Froberger was eager to send him other pieces, in fact any piece he might request, if the psalm was appreciated by Kircher.³⁷ At any rate, Froberger seemed content with knowing merely Carissimi's first impression of his piece; had he wanted the master to examine it accurately, Froberger would not have recommended that Kircher refrain from leaving the score in anyone else's hand. Fourth, Froberger's remark that an autograph score would reveal his authorship is not surprising. His style of notation, such as in the volumes he offered Ferdinand III and Leopold I between 1649 and 1658, is so distinctive that his authorship would likely be identified not only by musicians in close relationship with him but by any Roman musician who had previously seen an autograph piece of his.

Why, then, did Froberger seek to conceal the authorship of the psalm sent to Kircher? According to Scharlau, Froberger's behavior would testify to his difficulty as a professional musician in adhering openly to Kircher's compositional theories, which was generally regarded as a matter for amateur composers.³⁸ But the musician's eagerness for receiving information on these theories makes such an explanation unconvincing, suggesting that he did not wish to appear as the author of the piece sent to Kircher in order not to condition the reaction of the singers who would have performed it. This view is supported by the three 1649 letters mentioned above (those of Froberger, Gans, and Schega) when their contents are analyzed in order to clear up what musical apprenticeship Froberger may have undergone with Kircher during his second visit to Rome.

³⁷ Carteggio kircheriano 557b, fol. 305v. The passage, omitted in Scharlau's transcription of the letter, reads: "If this psalm pleases you, you should merely require and command me and I shall make more of the same or whatever else of mine you would like to have. I shall do such with diligence and send Your Reverence everything that you desire of me."

³⁸ Scharlau, *Athanasius Kircher*, 351. For Kircher's boast that his theories would enable even nonmusicians to become composers, see the passage from the *Musurgia* cited below in the main text.

* * *

To envisage the secret canonic technique Kircher revealed to Froberger on the eve of the latter's return to Vienna, we should perhaps look at the chapter of the *Musurgia* titled "De secreto canonis harmonici musarithmorum ope perficiendi" (On the Secret of the Harmonic Canon To Be Made through Musical Numbers), which describes a mathematical method to derive a canon on the unison from the simplest note-against-note counterpoint.³⁹ The contents of this chapter correspond extremely well to the secret communicated by Kircher to Froberger, not only because they deal with the same kind of canon at which the musician hints in his letter of September 1649 but also because Kircher presents them as if for the first time—i.e., even if he had previously disclosed the secret to Froberger, the latter, as has been suggested above, would have had to promise not to communicate it to anybody:

And these things, which I made up my mind to reveal to musicians, are a secret which is as amazing as it is important in any compositional matter.⁴⁰

Furthermore, the secret in question is so elementary that a glance at the examples provided by Kircher would be sufficient for any musician to grasp the essence of his method, thus conforming perfectly to the conciseness of the revelation that Kircher apparently made to Froberger in their last meeting in Rome—which, after all, was a farewell visit rather than a lesson in composition. But if Kircher's revelation did not conclude some previous discussion with Froberger on canonic techniques and merely represented a sort of precious souvenir of Rome—a token of esteem of a great theoretician toward a composer to be mentioned in his forthcoming treatise—what kind of apprenticeship would Froberger have undergone with him? To my mind, the answer is suggested in the musician's complaint that had he learned earlier Kircher's mathematical method of composing a canon on the unison, the compositional machine built for the emperor would have worked more efficiently. In fact, such a complaint could only refer to one of the two musical boxes described in the *Musurgia*: not the so-called *arca musarithmica*, which is described at length and even

³⁹ Kircher, *Musurgia*, II: 165–66.

⁴⁰ Kircher, *Musurgia*, II: 165–66: "Et haec sunt, quae Musicis communicanda duxi, secretum uti mirificum, ita ingentis in toto negotio harmonico momenti."

reproduced in a large engraving attached to the treatise,⁴¹ but the so-called *arca musurgica*, which is described there very briefly, as Kircher regarded its details a secret to be communicated only to the happy few:

The reader should know that in this book we have intentionally omitted any written example of the above-mentioned artifice, since it is reserved only to princes and some worthy friends.⁴²

Overlooking the description of the *arca musurgica*, Scharlau is led to conclude that the machine Froberger regarded as capable of being improved through the secret canonic techniques of Kircher was an *arca musarithmica*.⁴³ This one, however, had nothing to do with canons, since it was intended to set literary texts to music in any meter and language and could produce, at best, pieces in a florid polyphonic style. On the contrary, canonic techniques fit perfectly with the *arca musurgica*, which was intended to produce pieces in five different styles:

[We] have also built a special *arca musurgica*, very different from the one dealt with below [i.e., the *arca musarithmica*]. We dealt there with five musical styles using such devices that, whatever style in which someone wishes to compose, he may find what accomplishes his desire. The first style is the recitative style, whose combinations are arranged in the first compartment of the box and are so suitable to words that even ignorant people can easily deal with whatever text, comic or tragic, it may be; the second compartment concerns so perfect a way of treating church style that even a nonmusician could accomplish church melodies with great ability; the third includes fugal combinations arranged by degrees [. . .]; the fourth contains combinations to be used for dance style, and, if you wish to compose some *sinfonias* to be played by instruments only, you will find there

⁴¹ Kircher, *Musurgia*, II: 185–90. The engraving in question is inserted between pages 186 and 187. Its caption speaks of an *arca musurgica*, but the main text unequivocally refers to an *arca musarithmica*. Scharlau, who has apparently examined a seventeenth-century *arca musarithmica* in the Herzog August-Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, specifies its size (23 cm in height, 17 cm in width, and 5 cm in depth) and notes: "It is an upright, narrow box on whose forefront and rear there are the combinations of clefs and the tables of keys described in the *Musurgia*, while inside there are arranged movable cards whose recto and verso contain, respectively, the tables of musical numbers and the corresponding rhythms published in the *Musurgia*" (Scharlau, *Athanasius Kircher*, 206).

⁴² Kircher, *Musurgia*, II: 184. Remarks concerning the secrecy of the *arca musurgica* also occur in idem, I: XIX, II: 147 and 166.

⁴³ Scharlau, "Neue Quellenfunde," 50.

that which enables you to do so [. . .]; the fifth compartment of the *arca musurgica* contains polyphonic or many-voiced combinations so that there is no difficulty in putting together compositions for 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 voices. We have also gone on with the compositions of this kind so as to reach 16 voices or more to be conveniently divided among four choirs.⁴⁴

Perhaps the most compelling proof that the machine delivered by Froberger to Ferdinand III on 6 August 1649 was the five-style machine is Kircher's efforts to maintain its secrecy. Such efforts—which strongly recall the passages of the *Musurgia* that underline the need to communicate the use of the *arca musurgica* only to the happy few—are testified to by either Gans's letter of 7 August 1649 referring to the meeting of Froberger with the emperor and implying, as we have seen, that the former was given no written instructions on the use of the machine,⁴⁵ or Froberger's letter of 18 September 1649 reporting that he had refused to show the use of the machine also to Gans "as he had not showed it to anyone"⁴⁶ (it goes without saying that the demonstration of the *arca musurgica* Froberger offered to the grand duke of Tuscany and the duke of Mantua on his way from Rome to Vienna was an exception authorized by their princely status). Such secrecy would make sense only if the machine were an *arca musurgica*, because a few months after Froberger returned to Vienna in August 1649, details about the *arca musarithmica* would have been within the easy reach of any reader of the newly published *Musurgia*, whereas the description of the *arca musurgica* was eventually omitted from the treatise.

It is possible that Froberger not only learned how to use the five-style machine but collaborated in its actual creation as well. This is suggested both by his remarks on the possibility of improving the compositional machine built for the emperor through Kircher's mathematical method of composing a canon on the unison and by his subsequent effort to build by himself a machine that took such method into account. At any rate, the five-style machine "required an astute approach in order to work well,"⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Kircher, *Musurgia*, II: 177–78.

⁴⁵ For a passage of the *Musurgia* openly hinting at the possibility that the secrets of the *arca musurgica* were communicated "orally" to princes, see Kircher, *Musurgia*, II: 166.

⁴⁶ This passage, omitted in Scharlau's transcription of the letter, reads: "It is unnecessary to repeat to Your Reverence here that I have delivered the box to Father Gans. He, however, desired that I show it to him, but I did no such thing. As I had not showed it to anyone, I therefore did not wish to show it to him" (Carteggio kircheriano 557b, fol. 305).

⁴⁷ Kircher, *Musurgia*, II: 166: "Artificium . . . ingenium requirit perspicax ad bene operandum."

and Ferdinand III was an amateur composer eager to use it himself. This means that instructing him orally on the resources of the machine in question was not an easy task to carry out and that it is most likely that Froberger spent a good part of his second stay in Rome discovering the wonders of the five-style machine under the guidance of its inventor. He thus faced compositional issues totally alien to a virtuoso keyboard player—since they encompassed all styles of vocal music, ranging from polyphonic writing to monodic practice.⁴⁸

We can now begin to understand why in April 1649, halfway through Froberger's apprenticeship with Kircher, the latter was complimented on the former's good behavior and musical progress by the confessor of archduke Leopold Wilhelm. To be sure, Schega may have been ironically referring to the fact that the musician was diligently carrying out the task committed to him by the emperor (a fact seemingly mocked by Gans when he had urged Kircher to send the five-style machine "even without Mr. Froberger"). But the use of an emphatic phrase such as "progress in the art of music" also points to something of greater importance. To Schega, music was—above all—vocal music, as was generally believed in the seventeenth century. Therefore, an organist who was gaining so thorough a knowledge of vocal music—as Froberger was doing by familiarizing himself with Kircher's five-style machine—was undoubtedly gaining the knowledge of music *tout court*.

If this is correct, we can also begin to understand what might have prejudiced the master and singers of Sant'Apollinare against the canonic psalm of Froberger, had they guessed its authorship: a widespread bias against vocal pieces composed by instrumentalists. It is well known that even Frescobaldi suffered from this prejudice.⁴⁹ Kircher himself shared it enough for Froberger to write to him: "Your Reverence will also not have imagined that I could have done a thing like this [an entire psalm as a canon on the unison]" and "In the same manner I could also make something different, more so than perhaps Your Reverence imagines."⁵⁰ This prejudice likely accounts for why Froberger preferred that Carissimi and

⁴⁸ If so, Froberger's second visit to Rome might well have begun in the last stage of Kircher's work on the first draft of the *Musurgia*, which was accomplished in fall 1647. Indeed, Froberger is quoted there as a composer, not as an adviser, like the other musicians listed in Kircher, *Musurgia*, I:xxii. But the absence of acknowledgment for any collaboration with Froberger that may have occurred could be explained by such a fact as that the musician cooperated with Kircher on an invention whose description was eventually omitted in the final version of the treatise.

⁴⁹ For criticism of Frescobaldi's vocal pieces by the Florentine theoretician Giovan Battista Doni and the papal singer Antimo Liberati, see Hammond, *Girolamo Frescobaldi*, 85, 267.

⁵⁰ Carteggio kircheriano 557b, fol. 305v. This passage is omitted in Scharlau's transcription.

his singers regard his psalm as a piece composed by such a highly esteemed theoretician as Kircher, rather than a virtuoso keyboard player like himself.

* * *

Froberger's other surviving letter to Kircher, dated 9 February 1654 in Regensburg, was written during a period in which the musician had turned to a more sedentary life at the imperial court after some years spent traveling in a number of European countries. Different from his letter of 1649, which contains no address since it was seemingly attached to the psalm sent to Kircher, this letter is clumsily addressed (figure 3) "All Molto Reverendo Padre Athanasio Kirchero, Padre della Società Giesù, nello Collegio Romano, Roma" (To the Most Honorable Father Athanasio Kirchero, Father of the Jesuit Society, in the Roman College, Rome).

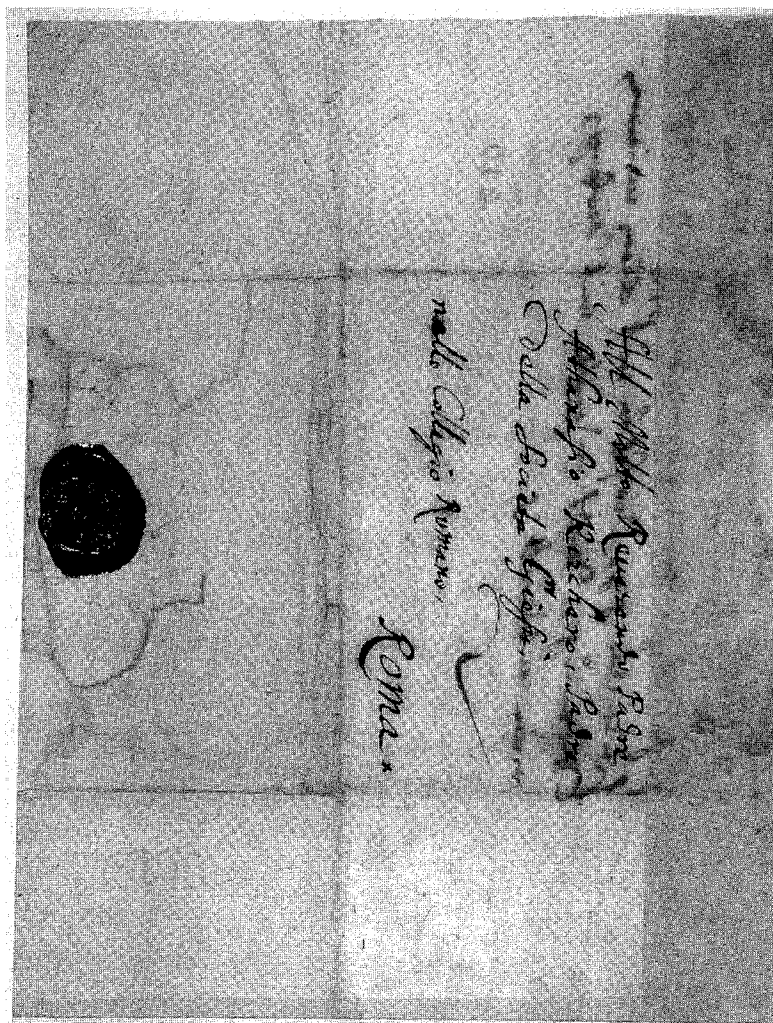
Such an address represents a specimen of Froberger's normal handwriting in Italian that, if compared with the Italian headings of his Viennese volumes, can prove decisively the autograph qualities of the whole set. The most apparent characteristic features are the capital letters of the words "Reverendo," "Romano," and "Roma" and the crosslike full stop after the last word, which correspond exactly to the capital letters and the full stops recurring in the headings of the *recercari* included in the 1658 volume.⁵¹

The main text of this letter does not deal with the music directly, but one passage seems to hint at the letter of September 1649. I am referring to Froberger's request for a copy of a book on music that Kircher had promised to him and that he had subsequently come across in England.⁵² If the book in question was the *Musurgia universalis*, as suggested by Scharlau, it is possible that five years earlier Kircher had answered Froberger's request for further information on canonic techniques based on mathematics by promising him a copy of his forthcoming treatise, in which a chapter headed "Tabula mirifica, omnia contrapunctisticae artis arcana revelans" (Wonderful Table Revealing All the Secrets of the Con-

⁵¹ Robert Hill's complaints of the lack of sufficient specimens of Froberger's ordinary handwriting to prove the autograph quality of his Viennese volumes (*17th-Century Keyboard Music*, 3:3) are due in part to the fact that Scharlau published the facsimiles only of the main text of Froberger's letters to Kircher—a German text written by the musician with sloping characters that are quite different from the upright ones he used when writing in Italian.

⁵² Scharlau, "Neue Quellenfunde," 49. The passage reads: "While [I was] in England [they showed] me that invaluable book about music, which not only they value greatly but which is also greatly esteemed everywhere. As I recall well that Your Reverence promised it to me, I have made as bold as to ask such of Your Reverence" (Carteggio kircheriano 557b, fols. 309–309v).

Figure 3: Autograph address of a 1654 letter from Froberger to Kircher (Rome, Archive of the Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Carteggio kircheriano 557b, fol. 310v)



trapuntal Art) actually displays a mathematical method to compose canons of any kind.⁵³

⁵³ Kircher, *Musurgia*, I: 361–65. Strangely enough, Scharlau's writings on Kircher thoroughly ignore the *tabula mirifica*. Its importance for the composition of canons of any kind

The chief biographical information of this letter, however, is not contained in the main text—which is concluded by a number of questions put forth by Froberger on behalf of a physician friend who was planning a trip to Arabia and wanted firsthand information on that country. It is contained on the page where the musician wrote the address quoted above, due to the fact that the wax seal used by Froberger to close the letter is still attached. Using a magnifying glass, one discovers that the seal shows the imprint of a coat of arms flanked by the initials "I.I.F.," surmounted by a winged helmet, and divided into two halves: the upper one with a heart pierced by two crossed arrows, the lower with three balls or rings (figures 4a and 4b).

Since such a design conforms to the heraldic patterns used at the time by German nobility,⁵⁴ we cannot help but wonder how Froberger—a professional musician like his father and his brothers—succeeded in acquiring a seal of such status. Consequently, a fascinating lead to be followed up on by his future biographers is this apparent change in his social status during his twenty years of service to the Hapsburgs. To be sure, a number of musicians serving the emperors of Germany in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are known to have been rewarded with some title of nobility: suffice it to mention Konrad Paumann and Hans Leo Hassler, each of whom was honored with the knighthood of the Golden Spur.⁵⁵ But in the case of a virtuoso instrumentalist such as Froberger, the cause of social ascent—his loyalty to his imperial patrons or the latter's appreciation of his exclusive art—would not be insignificant. In fact, if his lifelong dedication to keyboard music emerges as having been the actual cause of his ascription to German nobility, evidence also will emerge regarding the beginnings of the dignification of instrumental music in the culture of seventeenth-century Europe.

has been recently discussed in Giancarlo Bizzi, *Specchi invisibili dei suoni. La costruzione dei canoni: risposta a un enigma* (Rome: Edizioni Kappa, 1982), 59–133.

⁵⁴ A similar coat of arms is illustrated in Gottfried S. Fraenkel, *Pictorial and Decorative Title Pages from Music Sources* (New York: Dover, 1968), table 77. Its owner was a musician whom Froberger most likely met during his Roman stays—Johann Hieronymus Kapsberger, a German nobleman and celebrated theorbo player who was Kircher's consultant for instrumental music (Kircher, *Musurgia*, I:xxii).

⁵⁵ According to Elizabeth Luin, "Mozart—Ritter vom Goldenen Sporn," *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft* 22 (1955): 68, n.67, and Hans Joachim Moser, *Paul Hofhaimer. Ein Lied- und Orgelmeister des Deutsches Humanismus* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1966), 28, Froberger was also given a similar honor. Unfortunately, neither scholar supports the view with archival references. According to Robert Lindell, whom I cordially thank for his assistance, the sources available in the Vienna archives contain no mention of Froberger's knighthood.

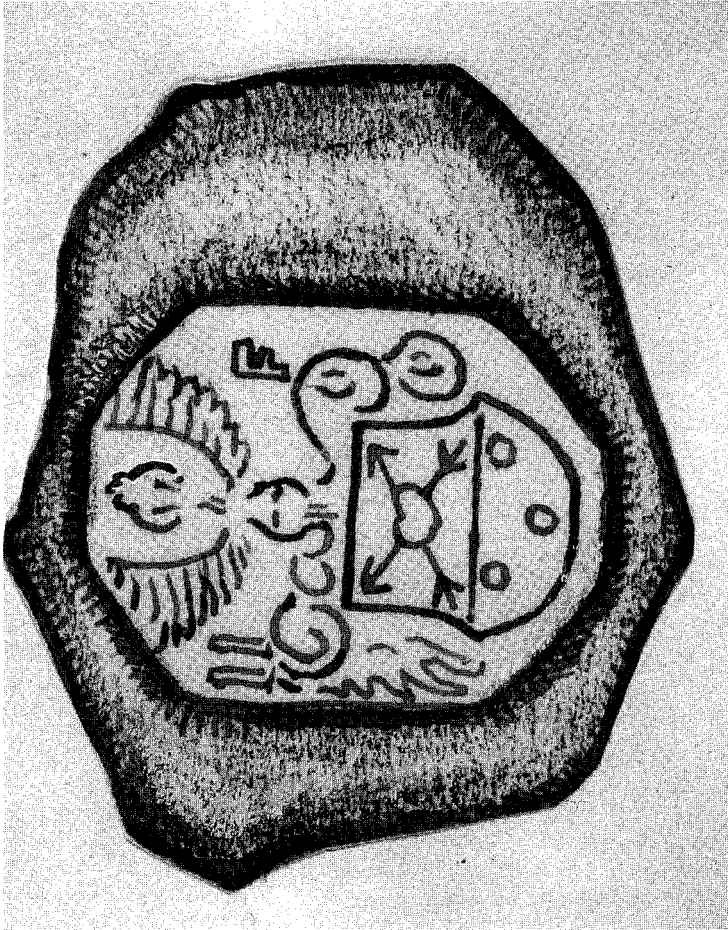
Figure 4a: The seal used by Froberger in his 1654 letter to Kircher (Carteggio kircheriano 557b, detail of fol. 310v)



ABSTRACT

The prevailing views on Froberger's two stays in Rome between 1637 and 1649 are revised in light of the author's findings in a number of Roman archives. Such findings include the first archival source testifying to Froberger's presence in the papal city during Frescobaldi's life. It is a parish register of 1640 enabling us to identify one of Froberger's dwellings in Rome, to reconstruct some musical events in which he may have assisted, and to discuss his relationships with Frescobaldi and the master's entourage both as a music student and as a composer in his own right. Two previously unknown letters written in 1649 to Athanasius Kircher by the confessors of, respectively, emperor Ferdinand III and archduke Leopold Wilhelm, Froberger's patron, enable us to consider Froberger's

Figure 4b: Drawn copy of the seal of 1654 (by the author)



well-known letter to Kircher of September 1649 as proof of the musician's apprenticeship not with Carissimi, as is currently held, but with Kircher himself as the inventor of a compositional machine to be delivered to the emperor. Finally, the author examines the other extant letter of Froberger to Kircher, dated February 1654, arguing that, as suggested by the coat of arms shown on its wax seal, one aspect of the musician's lifelong service to the Hapsburgs was a change in social status—the ramifications of which should be measured against the current notions of the inferiority of instrumental music in seventeenth-century culture.