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### Musical Books of Patterns in Seventeenth-Century Italy

When studying the late canons of Johann Sebastian Bach (BWV 1079, BWV 769 and 769a, BWV 1080), Erich Schenk in 1953 introduced the term "*Musikalisches Kunstbuch*" which can be translated as "*Musical book of patterns*"<sup>1</sup> or as "*Musical book of magic*" and as "*Book of musical alchemy*."<sup>2</sup> It consists of musical examples without commentaries and arranged in an order of increasing difficulty. These examples represent the quintessence of the skills of their composer.<sup>3</sup>

Schenk found out that Bach's late collections of counterpoints and canons were influenced by similar works: the *Musikalisches Kunst-Buch* by Johann Theile (1691), and the *Artificii musicali* by Giovanni Battista Vitali (1689).

Peter Cahn assumed that the collection of 5,625 canons in four volumes (ca. 1730-35) by Christoph Graupner might be the preparatory work to a "*Kunstbuch*."<sup>4</sup>

Dietrich Kämper took up the term "*Musikalisches Kunstbuch*" in a study of the *Capricci* (1564) by Vincenzo Ruffo.<sup>5</sup> He emphasizes the practical aspects and the encyclopedic intentions of such books.

Recently, the term even entered the new edition of the *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*.<sup>6</sup>

Although musicologists do not doubt that there are musical books of patterns, it is not easy to identify them because Schenk's definition leaves room for questions. For example: Must such a book be written for keyed instruments? Is the "*Well-tempered Piano*" another musical book of patterns? Has a musical book of patterns to be a single book, or can it be published in several part books? Can it be a single chapter, or

<sup>1</sup> Erich Schenk: *Das „Musikalische Opfer“ von Johann Sebastian Bach* (1953), in: Erich Schenk: *Ausgewählte Aufsätze, Reden und Vorträge*, Graz, Wien u. Köln 1967 (Wiener Musikwissenschaftliche Beiträge), pp. 61-72.

<sup>2</sup> These translations are used by David Yearsley who found alchemistic traces in Maier's and Theile's "*Kunstbücher*" as well as in the late canons of Bach. David Yearsley: *Alchemy and Counterpoint in an Age of Reason*, in: *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51 (1998), pp. 201-243, esp. pp. 221-238.

<sup>3</sup> „Unter einem musikalischen ‚Kunstbuch‘ versteht man eine Lehrschrift, in der der Verfasser die Quintessenz seines kompositorischen Könnens niederlegt, und zwar nicht mit Worten und eingestreuten Notenbeispielen, [...], sondern an Hand von Tonstücken verschiedenen Umfangs, die bei zunehmender Schwierigkeit aus dem Bereich des schulmäßig Erlernbaren zu Werken fortschreiten, die der praktischen Kunstübung dienen“. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Cahn: *Christoph Graupners „Kanons“ als Versuch einer systematischen Imitationslehre*, in: *Musiktheorie* 1 (1986), pp. 129-137.

<sup>5</sup> Kämper, Dietrich: *Vincenzo Ruffos Capricci und die Vorgeschichte des Musikalischen Kunstbuchs*, in: *Zeichen und Struktur in der Musik der Renaissance: ein Symposium aus Anlass der Jahrestagung der Gesellschaft für Musikforschung Münster 1987*, hrsg. v. Klaus Hortschansky, Kassel etc. 1989 (= *Musikwissenschaftliche Arbeiten* 28), pp. 107-120.

<sup>6</sup> Werner Braun: *Art. Kunstbuch*, in: *MGG2S*, vol. 5, Kassel 1996, col. 817-820.

must it be a complete book? What do they have to do with magic, alchemy, astrology and similar ideas?

Another question is how to distinguish some theoretical treatises from musical books of patterns. Since the last decades of the 16th century, textual explanations in treatises have decreased, and the numbers of musical examples without commentaries have increased. Antonio Brunelli's *Regole et dichiarazioni* (1610) ends with a chapter on musical canons without an explanation. Is it a musical book of patterns?

Vitali's *Artificii musicali* is not the first specimen of its kind in Italy. It has several predecessors. In a preface to the "Friend Reader," Vitali writes that he found canons scattered among the compositions by the greatest composers and that, in his eyes, the musical canon is the real climax of counterpoint. He continues: "I have examined different ones [i. e. canons] inserted in Masses and other compositions among many of the chapel choirs in Italy, so artfully made as to amaze me. In fact at Rome where flourish the most distinguished masters of this science, they are held in extraordinary esteem."<sup>7</sup> Vitali says that he found the patterns for his canons in masses and "other compositions." He informs us that the art of canon was cultivated in Italy by chapel choirs and that its centre was in Rome.

In this essay we will put aside the question of how canons in masses, especially how canonic masses have influenced the history of musical books of patterns. We rather concentrate on the "other compositions," which Vitali did not specify. His remark that the art of canon was cultivated by chapel choirs in Italy says that it was a vocal art. Its transfer to keyed instruments in Germany took place in ways still unknown. The process was influenced by the musical species of the "Ricercare" and by canons for keyed instruments written in Naples, in Germany, and in France. The late canons of Bach combine at least two different lines of tradition, both with roots in 17th-century Italy: masterly skill in piano-playing and masterly skill in composing counterpoint.

The *Artificii musicali* include 60 examples. No. 1 to No. 47 are canons, No. 48 to No. 51 are double counterpoints, the last nine examples deal with various musical questions. Three canons have a text (No. 1-3), and two are expressly for string instruments (No. 33 and 47). A systematic disposition of the canons does not exist. Looking into music history, one can find several similar books of patterns in Italy:

### Musical Books of Patterns in Italy 1579 – 1704

1579 Las Infantas, Fernando de: *Plura modulationum genera, quae vulgo contrapuncta appellantur, super excelso gregoriano cantu*, Venice (100 examples).

1587 Asola, Giovanni Matteo: *Madrigali a due voci accomodati da cantar in fuga diversamente sopra una parte sola*, Venice (36 examples).

<sup>7</sup> Giovanni B. Vitali: *Artificii musicali, ne quali si contengono canoni in diverse maniere, con-trapunti doppii, inventioni curiose, capritii e sonate*, Modena 1689. Modern edition by Louise Rood and Gertrude P. Smith, Smith College Music Archives 14, Northampton/Mass. 1959.

- 1587 Nanino, Giovanni Maria: *Motecta, ut vulgo appellantur, varie et nova inventione elaborata, quae ternis et quinis vocibus concinuntur*, Venice (32 examples).
- 1602 Nanino, Giovanni Maria: *157 contrappunti sopra un canto fermo*, Ms. (157 examples).
- 1610 Soriano, Francesco: *Canoni et obblighi di cento et dieci sorte sopra l'Ave Maris Stella*, Rome (110 examples).
- 1611 Valesi, Fulgenzio: *Canoni di più sorti fatti sopra doi canti fermi del primo tuono*, Milan (89 examples).
- 1612 Brunelli, Antonio: *Canoni varii musicali sopra un soggetto solo*, Venice (seven examples).
- 1613 Banchieri, Adriano: *Canoni musicali a quattro voci*, in: *Cartella musicale*, Bologna (eight examples). The first edition, printed in Milan, is lost.
- 1613 Cerone, Pietro: *Il melopeo y maestro*, Naples, lib. 22 on musical enigmas (65 examples by different authors).
- 1615 Micheli, Romano: *Musica vaga et artificiosa, continente mottetti con obblighi et canoni diversi, tanto per quelli, che si diletmano sentire varie curiosità, quanto per quelli, che vorranno professare d'intendere diversi studii della musica*, Venice (59 examples by Micheli and other authors).
- Ca. 1621 Zacconi, Lodovico: *Canoni musicali proprii e di diversi autori, con le loro divisioni, partiture, enarrationi et interpretationi*, Ms. (143 examples by different authors).
- 1622 Cima, Giovanni Paolo: *Ricercare et canoni a due, tre et quattro voci, da cantarsi in vari modi con differente armonia*, in: *Camillo Angleria: La regola del contrapponto e della musical compositione*, Milan (five examples).
- 1629 Valentini, Pier Francesco: *Illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte. Canone [...] con le sue resolutioni in più di duemilia modi*, Rome (one example).
- 1632 Briccio, Giovanni: *Canoni enigmatici musicali*, Rome (22 examples).
- 1633 Micheli, Romano: *Specimina musices magis reconditae*, Rome (nine examples).
- 1641 Del Buono, Gioanpietro: *Canoni, obblighi et sonate in varie maniere sopra l'Ave Maris Stella*, Palermo (97 examples).
- 1643 Scacchi, Marco: *Cribrum musicum, Venice. Part iii "Xenia Apollinea"* (58 examples by different authors).
- 1644 Micheli, Romano: *Canones super plurium verborum vocalibus. Quod artificium componendi neque in Italia nec alibi hactenus visum est. Nonnullaque curiosa artificia ad musices peritissimos pertinentia*, Rome (13 examples).
- 1669 Bononcini, Giovanni Maria: *Varii fiori del giardino musicale ovvero sonate da camera a 2, 3, e 4 col suo basso continuo et aggiunta d'alcuni canoni studiosi et osservati*, Bologna (eleven canons).
- 1677 Pasino, Stefano: *Guida e consequenti dell'opra composta in canoni*, Venice (16 examples).

1689 Vitali, Giovanni Battista: *Artificii musicali, ne quali si contengono canoni in diverse maniere, contrappunti doppii, inventioni curiose, capritii e sonate*, Modena (60 examples).

1704 Baroni, Filippo: *Canoni a due voci, parte all'unisono chiusi et altri risoluti, et alcuni alla dritta e alla reversa, et in diverse forme*, Bologna (47 examples).

Lost or not dated

- Agostini, Paolo: *200 Canons on the Cantus firmus "Ave Regina coelorum"* (mentioned in 1627 by Agostini).

- Cima, Giovanni Paolo: *Musical Book of Patterns* (mentioned in 1611 by Valesi and in 1614 by Banchieri).

- Milanta, Evil Merodach: *Cantate da camera a voce sola, e canoni a due, tre, quattro e sei voci, alcuni de quali sono svelati, altri artificiosi et osservati*, Ms. (not dated; 33 canons).

- Pesciolini, Biagio: *Musical publication with four artistic canons* (mentioned in 1621 by Zacconi).

- Valentini, Pier Francesco: *Canoni di diversi studi*, Ms. (not dated; 57 examples).

27 musical books of patterns were compiled in Italy between 1579 and 1704 with 1,439 musical pieces. Not all of them are canons or artistic counterpoints. Some pieces were transmitted several times, like, for instance, the eight canons by Banchieri. 15 musical books of patterns out of 27 were written in the orbit of the Roman School of composers. Thus, Vitali is right in his observation that the centre of this special art was Rome. Three composers, Micheli, Valentini and – in Germany – Bach, compiled more than one musical book of patterns. Several books have similar titles, thus showing mutual influences and similar intentions: the *Canoni varii musicali* by Brunelli, the *Canoni musicali* by Banchieri, the *Canoni musicali* by Zacconi, the *Canoni enigmatici musicali* by Briccio, but also the canons by Briccio and the *Enigmas musicales* by Cerone, the *Canoni et obblighi* by Soriano and the *Canoni, obblighi et sonate* by Del Buono.

Outside Italy, musical books of patterns were composed in England by William Byrd, Alfonso Ferrabosco, George Waterhouse, and John Bull; in Spain by Juan del Vado; and in Germany by Michael Maier, Samuel Scheidt, Johann Theile, and others.

Las Infantás's *Plura modulationum genera* is not the first book of musical patterns in Italy, but it marks the real beginning of the golden age of canons in Rome. Elements of such books are also found in the *Duo cromatici* by Agostino Licino (1545 and 1546), the *Musica nova* by Adrian Willaert (1559), and the *Canones et echo* (1572) by Lodovico Agostini.

In scope, musical books of patterns differ from each other; they contain one to 200 examples. The late German books consist of 13 (Theile and the *Musical Offering*) and of 20 (*The Art of Fugue*) examples. Maier's *Atalanta fugiens* (1618) comprises 50 fugues on a cantus firmus, Scheidt's *Tabulatura nova, part one* (1624) includes 24 canons. The real climax of volume is reached by Waterhouse with 1,163 examples in one single book.

The golden age of canon in Rome was initiated by the reform of Gregorian Chant. This assignment was given to Annibale Zoilo and Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina in 1577. Several other composers were involved, or at least wanted to be involved, in this prestigious and lucrative enterprise, and all of them composed musical books of patterns with examples on Gregorian Chant: Las Infantas, Nanino, Valesi, and Soriano. By this way they could show their knowledge in Gregorian Chant and their skill in artistic and in improvised counterpoint. One theorist and seven other masters used these musical books of patterns as models: Rodio (*Regole di musica*, 1600), Brunelli, Paolo Agostini, and Del Buono in Italy, Maier in Germany, Byrd, Ferrabosco, Waterhouse, and Bull in England. Valentini (1629) and Briccio also examined one single aspect of artistic counterpoint. Such an arrangement can be associated with the musical species of variation. Bach's *Musical Offering* and *The Art of Fugue*, both written on a single theme, are late representatives of the category. In monothematic books with many examples, the pieces are often systematically arranged according to the interval of imitation, distance of imitation and number of voices.

Other composers tried to present and to exercise different forms of artistic counterpoint created by themselves or by different authors: Micheli, Zacconi, Cima (1622), Scacchi, and Bononcini. Such a multithematic arrangement is also realized in Vitalis *Artificii musicali* and in Theile's *Kunst-Buch*. The two characteristics "monothematic" and "multithematic" can help to distinguish different lines of tradition in musical books of patterns.

Several musical books of patterns collect enigmatic canons by the author or by other composers: Banchieri, Cerone, Micheli (1615), Zacconi, and Briccio. They are collections of curiosities and are meant to impress the readers and animate their intelligence.

At the beginning of his musical book of patterns, Las Infantas published a canon on an artistic print. It is the first example of music printed in the new technique of copper-plate engraving. Las Infantas also published the same page in his three books of motets (1578 and 1579). Two canons are on the front page of the "*Canoni di più sorti fatti sopra doi canti fermi del primo tuono*" by Valesi. Another canon in an artistic print is at the beginning of Valentini's "*Canone [...] con le sue resolutioni in più di duemilia modi.*" Stefano Pasino integrated two artistic prints with canons into his musical book of patterns.

Two of the five manuscript copies of Theile's *Musicalisches Kunst-Buch* include his *Harmonic tree*, formed by two canons in an artistic drawing. In Vitali's *Artificii musicali* one canon is written in a circle. Another canon in a circle is in the *Musica vaga et artificiosa* by Romano Micheli. The author of the canon is Grammatico Metallo. The musical book of patterns by Cerone is full of canons on artistic prints, and Valentini's manuscript *Canoni di diversi studi* is full of handwritten canons connected with various pictures. Obviously, canons on artistic prints or drawings are important elements of musical books of patterns. Seen against the background of alchemistic thinking, they can be understood as symbols of Hermetic philosophy.

At least three books were written as reactions in controversies in which the skills in artistic counterpoint of their composers had been attacked. They are by Nanino

(1602), Soriano, and Scacchi. Others were created in academical contexts. Such works are by Asola, Bononcini, Vitali, and Bach. Romano Micheli had another reason to show his skills in artistic counterpoint: He wanted to become the official composer of the Papal Singers after the death of Felice Anerio in 1614.

Musical books of patterns in Italy often begin with a long elucidative preface after the dedication, addressed to the "*benevolent reader*." This shows the intellectual pretensions of their authors or editors.

Besides similarities, there are differences between musical books of patterns. The greatest differences are the various counterpointal techniques used by the composer. Other differences can be found in the intentions of the books. Some put their emphasis on didactic, others on skilful aims.

Many examples are without a text; they should be sung by solmization. There is no reason to assume that examples without texts were written especially for instruments or only for study. Sometimes there is a hint that such examples might be sung or played. Other examples have sacred or secular texts.

Sometimes different species of music are mixed in one musical book of patterns: Las Infantas, Nanino (1602) and Soriano mixed canons and non-canonic counterpoints; Cima "ricercari" and canons; Del Buono sonatas, non-canonic counterpoints, and canons; Vitali canons, double counterpoints, "capriccii," and sonatas; Milanta chamber cantatas and canons.

This is only a general survey of a historical phenomenon which so far has not been researched sufficiently. In a second step, musicologists may work at the interdependence between musical books of patterns which were written in various European regions.