

INTRODUCTION

The Composer and the Music

Born in Longiano near Forlì around 1560, Giulio Belli received his musical training in Napoli with Giovan Tomaso Cimello. After his first known appointment as *maestro di cappella* at Imola Cathedral in 1582 he became an itinerant chapel master until he died, probably around 1622.¹ Holding positions as *maestro di cappella* at both churches and courts, most of them for only a short period, he became well acquainted with both tradition and new developments in local styles and genres in Italian music in the formative decades around 1600.² His most prestigious positions were as *magister* of music at the Church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venezia and as *maestro di cappella* in the pilgrimage Church of San Antonio in Padova.

Although secular canzonettes and madrigals are among his early works, it was as a prolific composer of vocal church music that he became a highly esteemed figure in the musical life of the times. Most of his publications are intended for strictly liturgical use, including masses, Vesper psalms, music for Compline, antiphons and litanies. He is mentioned with respect in Adriano Banchieri's *Conclusioni nel suono dell'organo*,³ and Belli is the author of a treatise on counterpoint,⁴ demonstrating his interest in music theory. His compositions travelled north of the Alps in widespread and popular secular and sacred anthologies such as *Madrigals to five voyces. Celected out of the best approved Italian authors* by Thomas Morley (London: Thomas East, 1598),⁵ Erhard Bodenschatz's *Florilegii musici Portensis, pars altera* (Leipzig: Abraham Lamberg, 1621),⁶ and the two anthologies with the same title, *Promptuarium musicum, pars tertia, pars quarta*, one edited by Abraham Schadaeus (Nürnberg: Paul Kauffmann, 1613, and Strasbourg: Anton Bertram, 1617),⁷ the other by Johannes Donfrid, *pars prima, pars altera, pars tertia* (Strasbourg: Paul Ledertz, 1622, 1623, and 1627).⁸ They bear witness to Belli's reputation outside Italy.

1. On the title page of the reprint from 1622 of his *Concerti ecclesiastici* (1613) by Pierre Phalèse in Antwerpen he is referred to as still being a "magister musicae capellae cathedralis ecclesiae Imolensis". Phalèse was likely unaware of Belli's whereabouts in 1622 and simply repeated what he found on the 1613 title page (see Editorial Report. Sources. C).

2. A study of the life and works of Belli is found in Giuseppe Vecchi, *Giulio Belli da Longiano* (Longiano: Edizioni del Teatro Petrella, 1986) with transcriptions by Gabriele Mendolicchio of the two canzoni from Belli's *Concerti ecclesiastici*. I am indebted to Jeffrey Kurtzman for having directed my attention to Vecchi's booklet.

3. Adriano Banchieri, *Conclusioni nel suono dell'organo* (Bologna: Gli heredi di Gio. Rossi, 1609; reprint, Bologna: Arnoldo Forni, 1981), 35. See also Uwe Wolf, *Notation und Aufführungspraxis: Studien zum Wandel von Notenschrift und Notenbild in italienischen Musikdrucken der Jahre 1571-1630* (Kassel: Edition Merseburger, 1992), 1: 29.

4. *Regole di Contrappunto*, autograph in Museo internazionale e biblioteca della musica di Bologna, Cod. 72.

5. RISM B/I 1598¹⁵.

6. RISM B/I 1621².

7. RISM B/I 1613² and 1617¹.

8. RISM B/I 1622², 1623² and 1627¹.

In his music for the church Belli took part in the transformation to the new media in contemporary sacred music by adding continuo parts to his earlier collections with vocal partbooks only. His *Concerti ecclesiastici*, published for the first time in Venice in 1613 by Bartolomeo Magni,⁹ pay tribute to the sacred concerto for few voices and basso continuo as it was established by Lodovico Grossi da Viadana in his *Cento concerti ecclesiastici* (Venezia: Giacomo Vincentio, 1602).¹⁰

It is in Belli's *Concerti ecclesiastici* that we find his only known instrumental works. The collection contains fourteen pieces for two voices and basso continuo and twelve for three voices and basso continuo.¹¹ As parallels to these vocal pieces he added one canzona for two melody instruments and one for three melody instruments, both of them with basso continuo for organ.¹² They are both structured in the old canzona style with sectional repetitions and the characteristic dactylic canzona beginning in imitation between the melody parts.

In these instrumental pieces Belli was not a musical revolutionary as Biagio Marini and Dario Castello were in their instrumental collections some years later, but although a conservative he paid due respect to the new instrumental media that he encountered during his lifelong services as a church musician and composer.

9. RISM A/I B 1771. The source for the two edited canzonas in this anthology is the reprint 1621, cf. the Editorial Reports.

10. RISM A/I V1360.

11. Roberto Poggiolini, who likely received musical instruction from Belli, is not represented in this collection, as is erroneously stated by Othmar Wessely/Silke Leopold, *MGG II*, vol. 2, s.v. "Belli, Giulio. Werke. A. III", and by Othmar Wessely/Walter Kreyszig, *Grove*, s.v. "Belli, Giulio. Works" (accessed December 15, 2009).

12. Both *MGG II* and *Grove* list these two compositions as both being for three melody instruments. See *MGG II*, *ibid.*, and *Grove*, *ibid.*