



PELLEGRINI, PADOVANO  
Complete music for organ  
(Brilliant Classics, 95259, 2018)

- Diapason, 680, (06/2019)

Heureuse idée que d'avoir réuni deux compositeurs nés à trente-cinq ans d'écart, mais dont les oeuvres se complètent pour brosser un portrait inattendu de l'orgue italien à la fin de la Renaissance.

Annibale Padovano, organiste à Saint-Marc de Venise puis à Graz, est l'auteur d'un bref recueil posthume (1604) comprenant, outre deux ricercares, quatre toccatas alternant diminutions volubiles et épisodes en imitation. On assiste à la naissance d'une forme qui se révélera extrêmement féconde durant toute l'ère baroque, de Frescobaldi à Bach en passant par Buxtehude. Maître de chapelle des cathédrales de Pesaro puis Milan, Vincenzo Pellegrini est connu pour la science profonde et sévère de ses oeuvres vocales. Au clavier de l'orgue, c'est au contraire la légèreté qui domine : ses Canzoni de intavolatura d'organo fatte alla francese (1599) prennent pour point de départ la citation d'une chanson fameuse qu'elles développent en un réjouissant babil improvisé.

Contrairement à la toccata en perpétuel devenir, la canzone sera victime d'une sorte d'embourgeoisement, ne retenant de son origine que le fameux rythme dactylique (une longue-deux brèves). Luca Scandali sert parfaitement ces pièces sur un orgue lumineux, dont certaines parties remontent à 1565. Il sait leur donner le caractère qui convient, de la solennité à la franche bonne humeur, et retrouve sans effort la faconde intarissable de leurs auteurs.

Vincent Genvrin

- Fanfare Magazine, 42:2, 2018

Annibale Padovano (1527–1575) and Vincenzo Pellegrini (c. 1562–c. 1630) were, after Girolamo Frescobaldi, secondary but significant figures in the development of Italian Renaissance organ music. Born in Padua, Padovano served as chief organist at St. Mark's in Venice from 1552 to 1565, at the same time that Adrian Willaert was maestro di cappella. The second of the cathedral's two organs was played from 1551 to 1557 by Girolamo Parabosco (c. 1524–1557) and from 1557 to 1584 by Claudio Merulo (1533–1604); with these two partners Padovano initiated the practice of both organs being played together for feasts on high holy days. In 1565 Padovano accepted an appointment as organist to Archduke Charles II of Austria; he moved to Graz in 1566, where he was then promoted to chief musician and Kapellmeister and in which city he died in 1575. He is often credited with having expanded the toccata form by introducing imitative sections into it, a development widely taken up by his successors.

Pellegrini was born in Pesaro. After seminary studies he was ordained a priest; as of 1582 he was serving at the city's cathedral as maestro di cappella and became a canon regular there in 1589. During his time there he took on numerous pupils and (in 1599) produced his only published book of organ works. He attained enough eminence that in 1603–04 he served as vicar capitular for the vacant episcopal see.

At the end of 1611 he was appointed maestro di cappella to the cathedral church in Milan. There, matters fared less well, as Padovano apparently proved negligent in discharging his duties. The musical standards of the choir declined appreciably; several singers were formally reprimanded or dismissed outright. The cathedral chapter admonished Padovano to devote more attention to his duties and even consulted Monteverdi to buttress their arguments. In mid-1630 Padovano drew up his will; it is presumed that he died shortly thereafter in a devastating plague that swept the city, though one source states that he died in “about 1632.” His primary contribution to the organ literature lies in his development of the canzon as a keyboard genre from the French chanson.

Luca Scandali performs all the works on a period instrument in the basilica church of St. Barbara in Mantua, built by Graziadio Antegnati in 1565. It features an unusually large number of split keys that enable it to surmount the normal limitations of meantone temperament from the era, thereby also facilitating modulations and transpositions. It is perfectly suited to this repertoire, and Scandali performs everything authoritatively. He is well recorded and provides detailed booklet notes, supplemented by the instrument’s specifications and an artist bio. This is a particularly winsome entry in Brilliant’s ongoing series of recordings of Italian organ music, that at the label’s super-budget price absolutely should not be missed by any fan of Renaissance instrumental music; enthusiastically recommended.

James A. Altena

- Early Music Review, October 2, 2018

The Graziadio Antegnati 1565 organ in the Basilica of Santa Barbara, Mantua, survives largely intact in its original configuration. Designed for Duke Guglielmo Gonzaga and his organist-composer Girolamo Cavazzoni, it has nine ripieno stops, two flutes and a □i□faro, as well as two sets of split keys in each octave. It was also designed to fit the acoustics of the basilica, something captured well on this recording, from the arresting organo pieno used for the opening Padavano toccata to the lighter-registered canzonas by Pellegrini.

Neither composer was associated with Mantua – Padavano worked mainly in Venice and Pellegrini in Milan – but their music was certainly written with instruments of this kind in mind. Padavano’s four surviving toccatas (one attributed) are based largely on slow-moving harmonies decorated by quick figurations, with some imitative sections. His two ricercars are complex contrapuntal constructions. Published in 1604, all are quite serious pieces demanding concentrated listening. It works well to break them up, as here, with groups of Pellegrini’s sectional canzonas published in 1599 which show a lighter idiom and some fine inspiration. Scandali uses the canzonas effectively to demonstrate the variety of registrations possible on the organ. Overall this is an excellent match of instrument and repertoire, and a convincing demonstration of this highly significant organ’s possibilities.

Noel O’Regan

- Choir & Organ, September 2018

There’s a rather becoming frisson to hearing two seminal 16th-century Voices on a renaissance organ with authentic meantone temperament, especially one as poetically crisp as the single-manual Graziadio Antegnati heard here. Luca Scandali has the measure of Pellegrini’s austere canzones, their Occasional borrowings from Clemens non Papa, Ianequin and others matched by his own striking originality. Padovano’s characterful toccatas and ricercars exalt in the contrapuntal richness of the Venetian School at its height. Scandali’s informative booklet note complements playing of wholly sympathetic insightfulness, captured in the conducive acoustics of Mantua’s Santa Barbara Basilica.

Michael Quinn