

Thesis of DLA Dissertation

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Arie and Motetti Passeggiati Volumes of Giovanni
Girolamo Kapsberger (1612)

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The Liszt Academy of Music 28th Doctoral School of Arts and
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Budapest

2018

I. Antecedents of the Research

My first opportunity to get to know the music of Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger appeared a few years ago when I received a CD as a gift which, beside his instrumental works (so-called ‘sinfonias’) contained also some of his ‘villanellas’ and ‘arias’ composed for solo vocalist and instrumental accompaniment. As the music of the 16th and 17th century has been at the centre of my cultural interest since my high school years, I have encountered the compositions of several artists of this era as a student, choir member and leader as well. I remarked the unique atmosphere of the artistic works of those days, which are still carrying the features of the Renaissance but are already clearly displaying the characteristics of the early Baroque. These features can be easily found not only in the pieces of well-known composers living in North Italy at that time, but also in the books entitled ‘Arie’ and ‘Motetti Passeggiati’ written by Kapsberger, who spent the greater part of his life in Rome.

Data about the life and compositions of Kapsberger can be rarely found in the literature. Apart from the current dissertation no book or study has been published in Hungarian. As a primary source regarding his biographical data I have used the book ‘Johann Hieronymus Kapsberger »nobile alemanno«’ by Pier Paolo Ciurlia,¹ the dissertation by James Forbes titled ‘The Nonliturgical Vocal Music of Johannes

¹ Pier Paolo Ciurlia: *Johann Hieronymus Kapsberger „nobile alemanno”*. *Una biografia* (Padova: Armelin Musica, 2010).

Hieronymus Kapsberger² and the entry of the Grove Lexicon reflecting on the composer written by Victor Anand Coelho.³

I have no knowledge about any comprehensive study written about the above-mentioned compositions collected and printed in the books titled 'Arie' and 'Motetti'. Like from most works of Kapsberger, from the volumes of 'Arie' and 'Motetti Passeggiati' no modern transcribed scores are available. Therefore, and because the facsimile edition contains a 'chitarrone' tabulature that is hardly readable, I have found it necessary to make my own transcription of the book 'Arie'. It has not only been useful during the analysis but perhaps it can also provide great help for future performances.

II. Sources

For the biography of Kapsberger I have used the three sources mentioned above.

When studying and analysing the stylistic features of his vocal works, the facsimile edition of his four volumes of *villanellas* (Rome, 1610, 1619, 1619, 1623),⁴ the cantata-like composition 'Libro Secondo

² James Forbes: *The Nonliturgical Vocal Music of Johannes Hieronymus Kapsberger (1580-1651)*. PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1977 (Microfilm).

³ Victor Anand Coelho: „Kapsberger, Giovanni Girolamo.” In: *Grove Music Online*. http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/14695?q=kapsberger&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit (the date of viewing: 26.05.2013).

⁴ Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger: *Villanelle Libri I-IV*. Facsimile: *Archivum Musicum. Collana di testi rari*, 28 (Firenze: Studio Per Edizioni Scelte, 1982).

D'Arie a una e più voci' (Rome, 1623),⁵ the 'I Pastori di Bettelemme' (Rome, 1630)⁶ and 'Cantiones sacrae' (Rome, 1628)⁷ written for 1–5 parts helped my work and better understanding. I have had no opportunity to acquire any other work of the composer using solo voices such as operas, madrigals etc.

For the transcription of the tabulature to modern score my method was based on the book 'The Notation of Polyphonic Music 900-1600' by Willi Apel⁸ and on a fragment of the preface written for the facsimile edition of Kapsberger's 'Libro quarto d'intavolatura di Chitarrone' (Rome, 1640).

'Le Nuove Musiche' (Florence, 1602) by Caccini, especially the preface of the edition, and the study 'The Theory of Hexachords, Solmisation and The Modal System' by Gaston G. Allaire⁹ were helping me in the process of analyses. To identify the texts used in 'Arie' I have used 'Die Präsenz der romanischen Literaturen in der 1655 nach Wien verkauften Fuggerbibliothek' by Alfred Noa¹⁰ and

⁵ Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger: *Libro Secondo D'Arie a una e più voci*. Facsimile: *Archivum Musicum. Collana di testi rari*, 32 (Firenze: Studio Per Edizioni Scelte, 1980).

⁶ Michael Dücker (ed.): *Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger: I Pastori di Bettelemme* (Köln: Edition Walhall, 2011).

⁷ Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger: *Cantiones sacrae*. Rudolf Hofstötter – Ingomar Rainer (ed.): *Wiener Edition Alter Musik vol. VII*. (Manz, Wien: Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien, Abteilung Musikpädagogik, 2000).

⁸ Willi Apel: *The Notation of Polyphonic Music 900-1600* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1949).

⁹ Gaston G. Allaire: *The Theory of Hexachords, Solmisation and The Modal System*. Musicological Studies and Documents 24. (American Institute of Musicology, 1972).

¹⁰ Alfred Noa: *Die Präsenz der romanischen Literaturen in der 1655 nach Wien verkauften Fuggerbibliothek* (Amsterdam – Atlanta: Editions Rodopi B. V., 1997).

‘Bibliothek der gedruckten weltlichen Vocalmusic Italiens’ by Emil Vogel¹¹ as valuable sources.

During my research I have also used reliable online sources. The following list contains the primary sources:

- www.oxfordmusiconline.com – ‘Grove Music Online’
- www.cantusindex.org – ‘Cantus Index: Catalogue of Chant Texts and Melodies’
- www.imslp.org – ‘Petrucci Music Library’.

III. Method

My approach to the subject is mainly historical, analytic and to a lesser extent practical, regarding possible performances. After introducing the historical era of his lifetime and the main musical features and characteristics of the most important genres and the style of the era itself (such as the attributes of ‘seconda pratica’, different types of coloraturas and ornaments, the hexachord system) I presented the two volumes in detail. The main aspects of the analysis were as follows:

- presence of the modal/tonal system
- usage of dissonances – for instance delayed tones or syncopated motion
- *linea melodica* – usage of ‘passaggi’ (as written ornaments), chromatic etc.
- switch of metre
- the importance of the text

¹¹ Emil Vogel: *Bibliothek der gedruckten weltlichen Vocalmusic Italiens. Aus den Jahren 1500–1700. Band I–II.* (Hildesheim–New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1972).

- madrigalism
- characteristics of the harmonies – importance and role of ‘basso continuo’, third-related chords etc.
- content – musical features – forms – manner of performance.

As mentioned above, for the analysis it had been necessary for the volume ‘Arie’ to be transcribed into a modern readable form. Regarding the difficulties and solutions of this process please find a separate chapter in the dissertation with detailed information provided on this subject.

I began the comprehensive analysis of the collections with the research of the origins of the texts and introduction of fashionable and beloved literary genres and tendencies which were present at that time. This was followed by the examination of musical features. Next, I selected a few arias and motettas, which were analysed in detail. Some of these works were then compared to compositions of dominant figures of the era (Peri, Monteverdi, Luzzaschi) and one of Kapsberger’s later volumes (‘Cantiones sacrae’).

IV. Results

Beside the iconic composers, many qualified masters were working that time, who are less known by the audience of our days. The primary goal of the dissertation was to present what a vibrant and prosperous musical life arose at the beginning of the 17th century not only in the courts in the northern part of Italy but also in Rome for instance. In this style vocal virtuosity and monodic style were playing an important role just like the methods of ‘seconda pratica’. Though extreme venturous modulations and chord-lines are not particular

attributes of Kapsberger's compositions in the two books discussed, we can easily find the typical ornaments discussed in Caccini's 'Le Nuove Musiche' (such as determined and outwritten ornaments like 'trillo', 'gruppo' or 'ribattuta di gola') or the recitational style and madrigalism. Therefore, we ought to conclude that the variable compositional toolkit used in order to express the text on a high level is determining in Kapsberger's two examined volumes. The purpose of the composer of German origin was not just to use 'passeggiati' and virtuosity for their own sake, but to represent the textual content in a deeper, more expressive way. Comparing his work for instance to some of Monteverdi's monodic motettas where 'passaggi' are used as well, many similarities may be found in their musical languages.

Like the book of Caccini or the other so called 'passeggiati' volumes from this time the work of Kapsberger could have been written with the purpose to present all possible kinds of ornaments and passages through these compositions. The composer possibly recorded this originally and normally improvisational technique with pedagogical aim, to provide educational material for contemporary performers to widen their practical knowledge about more nuanced ways of expressing the text. Of course, the composer could have been inspired by outstanding singers of his time who could use their body and voice so professionally, that they were able to perform almost all kinds of passages or ornaments with an 'aristocratic negligence' ('nobile sprezzatura') leaving the audience even more impressed and delighted.

V. Documentation of the Activities Relevant to the Topic of the Dissertation

Given that the compositions of Kapsberger in the two books discussed were composed for solo voice, as a choir leader I did not have the opportunity to perform them in concerts. However, ‘Omnes gentes’, which can be found in the collection ‘Cantiones sacrae’ has been performed several times in public concerts by my choir, Arte Semplice Chamber Choir:

- 2014.05.24. *Night of choirs*, Pesti Jézus Szíve Templom – Catholic church
- 2014.05.31. *9th International Choir Festival, Gerzat (France)*, Théâtre Cornillon
- 2014.12.14. *Advent concert*, Greek Catholic church on Rózsák tere, Budapest
- 2015.07.28. *Europa Cantat Festival*, Pécs, Irgalmas templom – Catholic church
- 2015.12.13. *Advent concert*, Budapest, Szent Szabina Chapel

In my work as a university teacher I am lecturing on and presenting the characteristic features of the era and its music. Researching and writing the actual dissertation has not just strengthened the already studied facts and aspects of the era and music but helped me both to get closer to its subject and to understand it in a more profound and professional way.