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# Orazio Michi: contemporary testimonials, documents, and work

Alexandra Ziane

*Per lo Sign.[ore] Orazio dell'Arpa,  
sonator d'arpa famoso*

Arpa non già, ma scala,  
onde in su 'l Ciel s'ascende,  
è questa che d'Orazio al collo pende.  
Le corde, ond'esce il suono,  
i gradi or meno or più sublimi sono;  
l'orecchio ascolta, e sale  
l'alma a la Reggia lucida immortale.  
Quando poi l'aurea chiave  
numero più soave  
ricerca, e n'apre un più gentil concerto,  
"Or ecco", grido, "il Paradiso aperto."

*For Mister Orazio dell'Arpa,  
the Famous Harpist*

Not just a harp, but a ladder  
On which to ascend to Heaven,  
Such is what hangs from Orazio's neck.  
The strings giving forth the sound  
Are the steps, now less, now more sublime;  
The ear is listening, and the soul  
Ascends to the bright palace of Heaven,  
And when the golden key  
Goes in search of the sweetest number  
And opens a most noble concert.  
"Behold", I exclaim, "open is Paradise."<sup>1</sup>

The harp against Orazio Michi's shoulder as a ladder leading to heaven, its strings the steps taking the soul up towards the radiant heavenly palace, and the sounds of a celestial concert – such are the images the poet Francesco Maia Materdona employs in his *Rime*, published in 1629, as he pays homage to the most famous harpist of his time. Though a search of contemporary sources yields references everywhere to this outstanding and much-appreciated virtuoso, today Michi is accorded just a few lines in reference books such as *New Grove dictionary of music and musicians* and *Musik in*

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Special thanks are due to Gertraud Trivedi who translated this article into English. Proceedings are planned, but have not yet been published. I also would like to thank Mara Galassi for all her help and for her continuous efforts in connection with Orazio Michi.

<sup>1</sup> Gianfrancesco Maia Materdona, *Rime*, Venice 1629, CCXCVII, in: Gianfrancesco Maia Materdona. *Opere*, ed. Gino Rizzo, Lecce: Milella 1989 (Biblioteca salentina di cultura 1), 212.

*Geschichte und Gegenwart*.<sup>2</sup> In the following paper I will present the known sources of Michi's time, give a short survey of what we know of his life before, and characterise his work on the basis of some concrete examples.

## I. Contemporary sources on Michi as musician and composer

The celebrated tenor Francesco Rasi, who almost certainly performed the title role in Monteverdi's *Orfeo* in 1607, writes in a letter of 9 April 1621 about an exquisite musical experience during his journey to Rome, where he heard the excellent playing of Orazio dell'Arpa.<sup>3</sup> Soon after, the aristocrat banker, intellectual, and art collector Vincenzo Giustiniani, who is known today mostly as a patron of Caravaggio, describes the musical scene of Rome in the first decades of the 17th century in his 1628 *Discorso sopra la musica*. After naming Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici as a great Florentine patron of music, Giustiniani mentions Cardinal Montalto, who not only played the harpsichord but surrounded himself with remarkable musicians, amongst them "Orazio, an outstanding player of the double harp".<sup>4</sup>

In the same year of 1628, reference is made to Orazio Michi in another source that has not caught the eye of musicologists to date: in a letter of the scientist Benedetto Castelli to Galileo Galilei. Castelli, a close confidant of Galilei, had been called to Rome by the pope. Castelli was looking after the

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2 The article "Michi, Orazio", in: *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Second Edition, *Personenteil* 12 (2004), cols. 170–171 was written by the editors and based largely on the article by Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini in the first Edition of MGG (Vol. 9, c. 274). A little more comprehensive is the article by John Walter Hill, "Michi, Orazio", in: *The New Grove dictionary of music and musicians*, Second Edition, 16 (2001), 598.

3 Cf. Warren Kirkendale, "Zur Biographie des ersten Orfeo, Francesco Rasi", in: *Claudio Monteverdi. Festschrift Reinhold Hammerstein zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Ludwig Finscher, Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1986, 297–335: 320.

4 "Orazio sonatore raro d'Arpa doppia". Vincenzo Giustiniani: "Discorso sopra la musica de' suoi tempi", in: *Le origini del melodramma. Testimonianze dei contemporanei raccolte*, ed. Angelo Solerti, Torino 1903, Reprint Hildesheim and New York: G. Olms 1969, 98–128: 110 and 124.

education of Taddeo Barberini,<sup>5</sup> the young nephew of the pontiff, and subsequently the education of Galileo Galilei's nephew Vincenzo Galilei, who had come to Rome in order to deepen his musical knowledge. In a letter dated 8 January 1628 and addressed to Galileo Galilei in Florence, Benedetto Castelli says:

Thursday evening your nephew, Mr Vincenzio, arrived here safely [...]. With regard to his studies, Signor Orazio dell'Arpe (with whom I have as yet been unable to confer), together with Monsignore [Ciampoli], will recommend him to a person who will allow him to profit much in musical terms.<sup>6</sup>

The fact that Castelli does not formally introduce or discuss "Signor Orazio dell'Arpe" would suggest that Galilei already knew about him, or might even have proposed Orazio as his nephew's musical mentor himself.

The French writer Gédéon Tallement des Réaux (1619–1692), who visited Rome in 1638, reports that viola da gamba player André Maugars did not have the courage to perform in the presence of "seigneur Horatio", then musician at the court of Cardinal Maurizio of Savoy.<sup>7</sup> Maugars was also evidently well informed about Michi's impressive income, as he mentions that Cardinal Montalto, who was very pleased by the musical skill of the harpist, was paying him 5,000 or 6,000 *scudi* per month. Also Pietro Della Valle, an intellectual, poet, and amateur musician, speaks with enthusiasm not only of

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Augusto De Ferrari "Castelli, Benedetto (al secolo, Antonio)", in: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Vol. 21, 1978, [www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/benedetto-castelli\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/benedetto-castelli_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) (15.11.2016).

<sup>6</sup> "Giovedì a sera giunse il Sig. Vincenzio nipote di V.[ostra] S.[ignoria] sano e salvo [...]. Quanto allo studio, il Signor Orazio dell'Arpe (col quale non ho ancora potuto parlare) insieme con Monsignore [Ciampoli] lo raccomanderanno a persona che lo potrà far guadagnare assai nella musica.", in: *Opere complete di Galileo Galilei. Supplemento*, ed. Eugenio Albèri, Florence: Società Editrice Fiorentina 1856, 201–202.

<sup>7</sup> Gédéon Tallement des Réaux, *Les historiettes*, ed. Monmerqué, de Chateaugiron and Taschereau, Paris: Alphonse Levavasseur, Libraire 1834, Vol. 2, 119–120. Cf. also André Maugars, "Risposta data a un curioso sul sentimento della musica in Italia", translated and commented by Jean Lionnet, in: *Nuova rivista musicale italiana* 19 (1985), 681–707: 681.



Orazio's virtuosity but also of his skill as a composer of "musica moderna".<sup>8</sup> Della Valle cites two compositions by Orazio: *Or che la notte del silenzio amica*, which is attributed to Luigi Rossi though it is most probably by Michi, and *Per torbido mare* by Michi whom he merely calls "Orazio".<sup>9</sup> Strangely, Giovanni Battista Doni, who generally reveals a conservative taste in music, also names Michi, alongside Frescobaldi and Michelangelo Rossi, as a master of his instrument in *De praestantia musicae veteris*.<sup>10</sup> In his *Musica scenica*, Doni praises Michi's harp-playing alone as most excellent in its accompaniment of the solo voice.<sup>11</sup>

Michi's fame spread beyond the limits of Rome. In his treatise on composition, *Discorsi e regole sopra la musica e il contrappunto* (dated around 1650), Severo Bonini, the Florentine composer and admirer of Caccini, also

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<sup>8</sup> Pietro Della Valle, "Della musica dell'età nostra che non è punto inferiore, anzi è migliore di quella dell'età passata", in: *Le origini del melodramma. Testimonianze dei contemporanei raccolte*, ed. Angelo Solerti, Turin 1903, Reprint Hildesheim and New York: G. Olms, 1969, 148–179: 158, 159, 167–168.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Robert Holzer, "'Sono d'altro garbo ... le canzonette chi si cantano oggi': Pietro Della Valle on music and modernity in the seventeenth century", in: *Studi musicali* 21 (1992), 253–306. *Per torbido mare* is contained in two sources: 1. I-Rsc, A. Ms. 247, a manuscript from the circle around cardinal Montalto (cf. John Walter Hill: *Roman monody, cantata, and opera from the circles around Cardinal Montalto*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1997, 164 and 175). 2. I-CVbav, Barb. lat. 4151, fols. 46v–48r. For further research on *Per torbido mare* cf. Margaret Murata, "Roman cantata scores as traces of musical culture and signs of its place in society", in: *Atti del XIV Congresso della Società internazionale di musicologia. Trasmissione e recezione delle forme di cultura musicale*, ed. Angelo Pompilio, Torino: EDT 1990, Vol. 1, 272–284: 282; Holzer, *ibid.*, 269–270; Gloria Rose "Pasqualini as Copyist", in: *Studien zur italienisch-deutschen Musikgeschichte*, ed. Friedrich Lippmann, Köln: Volk 1974 [Analecta Musicologica 14], 170–175; Maugars / Lionnet, "Risposta" (see n. 7, note 12), 691.

<sup>10</sup> Giovanni Battista Doni, "De praestantia musicae veteris" (1647), in: *Lyra Barberina amphichordos*, ed. Anton Francesco Gori and Giovanni Battista Passeri, Firenze 1763, Facsimile Bologna: Forni, 1974 (Bibliotheca musica Bononiensis 2, 151), Vol. 1, 117.

<sup>11</sup> Giovanni Battista Doni, "Trattato della Musica Scenica parte I" (first version, before 1634), in: *Lyra Barberina amphichordos*, ed. Anton Francesco Gori and Giovanni Battista Passeri, Firenze 1763, Facsimile Bologna: Forni 1974 (Bibliotheca musica Bononiensis 2, 151), Vol. 2, 22.

mentions him not only as an unparalleled harpist but also as a composer of arias.<sup>12</sup> Further, Marin Mersenne does not fail to include a reference to this celebrated virtuoso in his 1636/1637 *Harmonie universelle*.<sup>13</sup>

The poet Gianfrancesco Maia Materdona mentioned earlier, a successor to Giambattista Marino, and who, like Orazio Michi, belonged to the circle around Cardinal Maurizio of Savoy, pays homage to “Orazio dell’Arpa, the renowned harpist” with his poem in his *Rime* of 1629. Many poets of the period wrote in praise of famous female singers, as is the case with Maia Materdona, who in his collection extols the beauty and the wonderful singing of Adriana Basile and Francesca Caccini. The only instrumentalist, and indeed the only man, that Maia Materdona includes in his collection is Orazio Michi, who paves the way to paradise with his harp.<sup>14</sup>

Antonio Bruni, another epigone of Marino, in his 1630 collection *Le tre gratie*, after eulogies to the pope, various dukes (in particular the Duke of Savoy), cardinals and Christopher Columbus, also dedicates a sonnet to Orazio Michi. Michi is the only artist Marino honours in this way, describing Orazio as an earthly angel who brings his ethereal harp to life, sending his audience into ecstasy:<sup>15</sup>

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12 I-Fn, Cod. Ricc. 2218, fol. 89v. Quoted from Alberto Cametti, “Orazio Michi ‘dell’Arpa’, virtuoso e compositore di musica della prima metà del Seicento”, in: *Rivista musicale italiana* 21 (1914), 203–271: 207.

13 Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie universelle*, Reprint, ed. François Lesure, Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique 1975, Vol. 3, 216.

14 See n. 1. Originally the poem was dedicated to Adriana Basile. Cf. Rizzo, *Materdona* (see n. 1), 434–435. Cf. also Elio Durante, Anna Martellotti: *L’arpa di Laura: Indagine organologica, artistica e archivistica sull’arpa estense*, Florence: Studio per Edizioni Scelte, 1982, 201. Following Dinko Fabris, the original poem is like this: “Arpa non è, ma scala / Onde su’l ciel s’ascende / Questa che d’Adriana al collo pende / Ecco la bella donna ‘n un momento / Sorridendo si volge; e lieta prende / (che stava accanto a lei) vago strumento / Che di finissimo ‘or superbo splende, / Alla cui cima, a guisa d’arco, e un legno; / E ferri onde le corde hanno sostegno.” (Dinko Fabris, “The harp in Naples 1500–1700”, in: *Historische Harfen: Beiträge zur Theorie und Praxis historischer Harfen*, ed. Heidrun Rosenzweig, Dornach: s. n. 1988, 43–59: 48–49). Thus more parts have been changed than just the name.

15 Antonio Bruni, *Le tre gratie*, Rome: Ottavio Ingrassiani 1630, 303.

*Al Sig.[nore] Horatio Michi,  
Musico celeberrimo.*

Se talhor scorri tù le fila d'oro  
De l'Arpa eburna, hor rapido, et hor lento,  
Odo sì dolce il peregrin contento,  
Ch'io non sono Idolatra, e pur l'adoro.

Sembra l'arpa una Sfera, e tù canoro  
Angel terreno ad animarla intento;  
Quinci l'alma languir, rapir mi sento  
A quelle melodie del sommo choro.

Par, ch'à lei si rimembri il canto eterno  
D'ogni mente là sù più chiara, e bella,  
Ch'udì beata già nel Ciel superno.

E mentre vò ne l'armonia novella  
Contemplando l'antica, apena io scerno,  
Se la musica Idea sia questa, ò quella.

*To Mister Horatio Michi,  
the Celebrated Musician*

Sometimes, when you glide over the golden strings  
Of your ivory harp, now fast, now slow,  
I hear such sweet and strange harmony, that  
Though no I am no idolator, I adore it.

The harp is like a sphere, and you its canorous,  
Earthly angel that brings it to life;  
And I feel my soul's longing, enraptured  
By those melodies of the heavenly choir.

Thus, when the eternal song is remembered,  
Every mind will find more precious, sublime  
The blessed music it heard in the heavens.

And while I enter into the new harmony,  
As I ponder the old one I hardly know  
If the ideal of music is this one, or that.

As stated above, today Orazio Michi is generally mentioned only in passing, even in the major encyclopaedias. The only monographic work on Michi to date is an essay by Alberto Cametti dated 1914.<sup>16</sup> Recently however, John Walter Hill turned his attention on Orazio Michi in his study of the musical patronage of Cardinal Montalto in Rome, and Hill also started a provisional list of Michi's works, though this list is largely incomplete.<sup>17</sup> (See my updated list of Michi's works following this article.)

## II. Outline of the life of Michi, a privileged musician at the courts of Rome

Despite Michi's fame during his lifetime, not much is currently known about the harpist's life. Important information is found in his testament, published by Alberto Cametti, and in an inventory compiled after his death.<sup>18</sup> Both indicate that he was a prosperous and highly regarded man who enjoyed

<sup>16</sup> Cametti, "Orazio Michi" (see n. 12).

<sup>17</sup> Hill, *Roman monody, cantata, and opera* (see n. 9), 176–179.

<sup>18</sup> I-Ras, protocollo 1396, carte 323–339. Cf. Cametti, "Orazio Michi" (see n. 12), 268.

numerous privileges. At the time of his death, Michi owned a luxuriously furnished house in the centre of Rome with numerous paintings by contemporary artists.<sup>19</sup> In addition to a large library, a ruby, 1,000 *scudi* in cash (a singer at the papal chapel earned around 23 *scudi* per month and would probably have been unable to lay aside such a sum of money in savings), as well as several musical instruments, Michi owned a horse carriage, which was a special privilege in Rome at that time. In his testament, he decreed that none other than the Papal Chapel Choir should sing mass on the day of his death.

As we know from his testament, Michi was born in Alife, a small town in the province of Caserta near Naples. The register of deaths, recorded 27 October 1641, states that Michi was 46 years old, so it follows that he was born around 1595. No information about Michi's apprenticeship survives, but since he had been a player of the *arpa doppia* we can assume that he was trained in the nearby city of Naples, which was at that time the centre for the *arpa doppia*.<sup>20</sup> The Roman harpist Bartolomeo Jovernardi, who left Italy in 1632 for Spain, remembered Bernardino Nanino in his treatise *Nueva ciencia* [...], printed 1653 in Madrid, as a teacher he had shared with the harpist Horacio Napolitano.<sup>21</sup> Nanino was employed as maestro di cappella at San Lorenzo in Damaso, the church attached to the Palazzo della Cancelleria, the residence of Cardinal Montalto.

The first piece of archival evidence on Orazio Michi is a household payment dated 1613, which he received from the same Cardinal Montalto in Rome, and in whose service Michi eventually rose to become the highest-paid musician. Cardinal Montalto provided Michi with an income of 300 *scudi* per annum from two of his abbeys, and even added an annual pension of

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<sup>19</sup> There are other Roman musicians of the 17th century that were in possession of collections of paintings. Elisabetta Frullini is writing a PhD dissertation about these musicians at present.

<sup>20</sup> Cametti, "Orazio Michi" (see n. 12), 210–212.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Luca Mancini, "Jovernardi, Bartolomeo", in: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Vol. 62, 2004, [www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bartolomeo-jovernardi\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bartolomeo-jovernardi_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) (22.11.2018). I would like to thank Chiara Granata for pointing out this information.

2,000 *scudi* in his testament.<sup>22</sup> In the Palazzo della Cancelleria in 1614, a performance in celebration of the marriage of Prince Michele Peretti and Anna Maria Cesi featured the musical spectacle *Amor pudico* by Jacopo Cicognini. As we know from a detailed description of the staging by Romolo Paradiso, Orazio Michi played the harp from inside a boat, representing Apollo in the midst of the nine Muses.<sup>23</sup> In 1615/1616 a musician named “Orazietto” played in the Cappella Giulia of the Basilica of San Pietro – it can be assumed that this “Orazietto” is Orazio Michi.<sup>24</sup>

The great importance of Montalto for the history of music in Rome became evident through John Walter Hill’s study, published in 1997. Hill shows that the new practice of solo singing which began at the start of the 17th century not only had roots in Florence, but that the improvised solo singing in Naples and Rome at the end of the 16th century in particular played an important role in the development of the Roman chamber cantata. Hill bases his argument on the presence of musicians around Cardinal Montalto and manuscripts of their compositions that survive. As mentioned earlier, although Orazio Michi was part of this group of musicians, owned two portraits of Cardinal Montalto,<sup>25</sup> and appears to have enjoyed a special position within the group (considering his most generous remuneration), none of the sources containing music by Michi are directly linked to Montalto’s

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22 Cf. Hill, *Roman monody, cantata, and opera* (see n. 9), 35. For the musical patronage of Montalto cf. James Chater, “Musical patronage in Rome at the turn of the seventeenth century: the case of Cardinal Montalto”, in: *Studi musicali* 16/1 (1987), 179–227.

23 Cf. Romolo Paradiso, *Copia d’una lettera del Sig. Romolo Paradiso con quale dà avviso dell’apparato, e grandezza, con che si è rappresentato il festino dell’Eccellentiss. Sig. Principe Peretti*, Rome 1614, 67. This refers to the “Hora quinta” of the musical drama, in a scene staging the sea. Then enters the ship with Apollo (which would be Michi) with the nine Muses. Cf. Jacopo Cicognini, *Amor pudico, festino e balli danzati in Roma*, Viterbo: Girolamo Discepolo 1614, 36–38. Cf. also Hill, *Roman monody, cantata, and opera* (see n. 9), 279–297, especially 291.

24 Cf. Giancarlo Rostirolla, “Il professionismo musicale a Roma al tempo di Francesco Buti (1640–1660), con particolare riguardo ai cantanti e ai suonatori”, in: *Francesco Buti tra Roma e Parigi. Diplomazia, poesia, teatro. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi* (Parma 12–15 dicembre 2007), ed. Francesco Luisi, Rome: Torre d’Orfeo 2009 (Miscellanea Musicologica 8), 313–347: 336.

25 Cf. Cametti, “Orazio Michi” (see n. 12), 224.

library. This would suggest that they were composed, or at least copied, at a later stage.<sup>26</sup>

We also know that Michi accompanied the litanies and *laudi* sung on Saturday evenings on the organ or harp in Montalto's titular church San Lorenzo in Damaso from about 1620 until the death of the cardinal.<sup>27</sup> A list of payments to the special musicians (*suonatori straordinari*) engaged for the dedication feast of Saint Peter in 1615 specifies a certain "Orazietto" as harpist, which also suggests Michi's presence in this important church.<sup>28</sup>

After Montalto's death in 1623, Orazio entered the service of Cardinal Maurizio of Savoy who was residing in Rome at the time. Maurizio, the son of Carlo Emanuele I, gathered a number of musicians at his court in addition to Michi: Michelangelo Rossi, Filippo Albin, Stefano Landi and his pupil, the castrato Angelo Ferrotti, Sigismondo d'India and Adriana Basile, Francesco Maria Fucci and Ottaviano Cambiano, furthermore the painters Niccolò Tornioli, Agostino Tassi, Giovanni Giacomo Sementi and Guido Reni, as well as a number of literati such as Ludovico d'Agliè.<sup>29</sup> The first docu-

<sup>26</sup> According to Hill, most of the surviving works by Michi were composed after Montalto's death. None of the sources containing pieces by Michi have concordances in the repertoire of Montalto. Cf. Hill, *Roman monody, cantata, and opera* (see n. 9), 141 and 227.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Giovanni Bitozzi, *Notizie storiche della Basilica Collegiata Insigne di S. Lorenzo in Damaso*, Rome 1797, Vol. 1, 94–95, quoted from Patrizio Barbieri, "Ancora sugli organi di S. Lorenzo in Damaso, Roma", in: *Amici dell'organo di Roma*, Serie II, 4 (1985), 91–100: 95–96.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Giancarlo Rostirolla, "Musiche e apparati nella Basilica Vaticana per le feste dei Santi Pietro e Paolo e della dedizione della fine del XVI al primo quarto del XVII secolo, in: *Musik in Rom im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert: Kirche und Fest*, ed. Markus Engelhardt, Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2004 (Analecta musicologica 33), 417–474, 469 and idem, "Il professionismo musicale a Roma" (see n. 24), 336 and 339.

<sup>29</sup> Maurizio of Savoy came to Rome for the first time in February of 1621. From 1623 to 1627 and from 1635 to 1638 he resided permanently there. For Cardinal Maurizio, especially as patron, cf. Stanislao Cordero di Pamparato, "I musici alla corte di Carlo Emanuele I di Savoia", in: *Biblioteca della Società storica subalpina* 121 (1930), 31–142, about Michi 120–122; Michela Di Macco, "'L'ornamento del Principe.' Cultura figurativa di Maurizio di Savoia (1619–1627)", in: *Le collezioni di Carlo Emanuele I di Savoia*, ed. Giovanni Romano, Torino: Fondazione CRT 1995, 349–374; Cristina Santarelli: "Un



mented payment to Orazio Michi is made during the months of July to September 1623. In his new position Michi was immediately paid an income of 400 *scudi* per annum, as well as accommodation.<sup>30</sup> A comparison with the painters in Maurizio's service provides a measure of the value of this payment, as he spent a total of 755 *scudi* on them for the whole of 1623. Unfortunately, there have been no studies so far on the musicians at Maurizio's court; while Matthias Oberli's research on the cardinal's patronage includes builders, stone masons, gilders and carpenters, there is no mention at all of musicians.<sup>31</sup> Many of the educated elite also participated in events at Cardinal Maurizio's "Accademia dei Desiosi", which he had founded in Rome in 1626, and where music was performed every Friday.<sup>32</sup> From an exchange of letters it is evident that Orazio Michi refused to accompany the cardinal to his home town Turin where Maurizio of Savoy was obliged to travel in the spring of 1627.<sup>33</sup> Michi even declined an extremely well paid journey to Germany with the Duke of Provence, ostensibly because he did not wish to leave the Oratorian Fathers of Filippo Neri.<sup>34</sup>

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musicista alla corte di Carlo Emanuele I: Filippo Albini da Moncalieri", in: *Politica e cultura nell'età di Carlo Emanuele I: Torino, Parigi, Madrid*, proceedings, ed. Mariarosa Masoero et al., Florence: Olschki 1999, 573–587. Detailed information and indication for archival sources concerning Michi cf. Jorge Morales, *Sigismondo D'India à la cour de Turin. Musique, mécénat et identité nobiliaire*, PhD dissertation, Université de Paris-Sorbonne/Università di Roma "La Sapienza" 2014 ([www.theses.fr/2014PA040139](http://www.theses.fr/2014PA040139)), 540, 548, 549, 564. Morales indicates also a *Dies irae* in Ms. 2663 of the Biblioteca Casanatense in Rome, which in fact seems to be only an anonymously written cantus firmus.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Cordero di Pamparato, "Carlo Emanuele I di Savoia" (see n. 29), 120.

<sup>31</sup> For example, he mentions Stefano Landi as an agent but remains silent on the fact that Landi was a composer. Sigismondo D'India, Filippo Albini and Orazio Michi are not mentioned at all. Cf. Matthias Oberli, *"Magnificentia Principis": Das Mäzenatentum des Prinzen und Kardinals Maurizio von Savoyen (1593–1657)*, Weimar: VDG, Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaft 1999, 288.

<sup>32</sup> "un concerto di diversi strumenti" was given on Fridays. Cf. Di Macco, "Maurizio di Savoia" (see n. 29), 357. There is no further information about the music in the academies in Riccardo Merolla: *L'accademia dei desiosi*, Rome: Carocci 2008 (La ricerca letteraria 10). About the music on Fridays see *ibid.*, 57.

<sup>33</sup> Cordero di Pamparato, "Carlo Emanuele I di Savoia" (see n. 29), 120.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

Before the virtuoso harpist was dismissed from the service of Cardinal Maurizio of Savoy in 1630 because of his capricious behaviour,<sup>35</sup> Michi had already given a concert for Cardinal Francesco Barberini in 1628,<sup>36</sup> and as early as 1629 he appeared in Cardinal Antonio Barberini's pay lists.<sup>37</sup> Michi had also set "Veggio nel tuo costato aspra ferita" to music, a sonnet by Maffeo Barberini (since 1623 Pope Urban VIII), a further indication of his close relationship with the Barberini.<sup>38</sup> In addition to serving these great cardinals, Michi was actively involved in the music for divine service at Filippo Neri's Oratory where, as Arnaldo Morelli indicates,<sup>39</sup> he performed as a soprano. Towards the end of the 16th century, the Oratorians were already a major influence in the musical life of Rome, where they not only initiated the "esercizi spirituali", known as "oratori", but accompanied these religious exercises with devotional songs, "laudi spirituali", in Italian. Not only did Michi decline to go on a journey because of the Oratorians, but in 1633 he also had a burial place reserved for himself in the Chiesa Nuova; there he was duly laid to rest in 1641. Further, Michi bequeathed the major part of his sub-

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Frederick Hammond, *Music & spectacle in baroque Rome: Barberini patronage under Urban VIII*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1994, 82. A letter from Antonio Vincenzo Averoldi from Rome to Enzo Bentivoglio in 1620 may give another indication of Michi's connection with Francesco Barberini – or Francesco Borghese. See n. 60.

<sup>37</sup> It is a matter from a payment of 20 scudi by Antonio Barberini to Michi for the purchase of harp strings on 27.4.1629 and the copying of arias of Michi by Marc'Antonio Pasqualini for singing them. Cf. Maugars / Lionnet, "Risposta" (see n. 7), note 12, 691. In the same note Lionnet, however, seems to be wrongly indicating that Michi would have been organist at Santa Maria Maggiore from 1629 onwards. Unfortunately, he does not give any further details about this information. Frederick Hammond (Hammond, *Music & spectacle* (see n. 36) 85 and 301, note 41) adopts this information from Lionnet. John Burke (*Musicians of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome, 1600–1700. A social and economic study, Supplement of: Note d'archivio per la storia musicale*, n.s., 2, 1984, Venice: Edizione Fondazione Levi 1984, 21), in his study about the cappella Liberiana from 1629 to 1635, mentions an organist called "Horatio", but with the surname "Verino".

<sup>38</sup> "Veggio nel tuo costato aspra ferita", I-Rc, 2490, fols. 56v–58r. Sonetto XXIV, in: Maffeo Barberini, *Poesie toscane*, Rome: Nella Stamperia dell Rev. C. Apostolica 1635, 24.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Arnaldo Morelli: *Il Tempio Armonico: Musica nell'Oratorio dei Filippini in Roma (1575–1705)*, Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 1991 (Analecta Musicologica 27), 24, 26, 72–73.



stantial assets to the Oratorians.<sup>40</sup> This concludes all the available evidence regarding Michi's close relationship with the Oratorians. Arnaldo Morelli's studies of the Oratorian Archive show that very few documents have come down to us from the first decades of the 17th century.<sup>41</sup>

During the last years of his life, Orazio Michi lived in the via di Panico on the *insula* of the Oratorio di San Celso, thus between the Chiesa Nuova and Castel Sant'Angelo. He died at his house on 26 October 1641 in the presence of some of his friends, among them the singers of the papal chapel, the celebrated Loreto Vittori, and Francesco Lancioni.<sup>42</sup>

### III. The *œuvre*: spiritual emotional outpourings

The works of Michi that have come down to us, as well as his biography, suggest a close association between Michi and the Oratorians. A peculiar feature of his vocal compositions is that they are mainly concerned with spiritual subjects despite being written in Italian, meaning that this music was accessible to everyone and therefore corresponded exactly to the music that was favoured by Filippo Neri and his successors.

All of Orazio Michi's extant works are vocal: we know of about 25 manuscripts containing a total of about 100 pieces for one or two voices and basso continuo – almost every one of them a collection of vocal chamber music by a number of different composers who worked in Rome during the 1630s. Among these surviving works, there are forms of the *canzonetta* or a Spanish variant, the *villancico*, which are simple strophic compositions, sometimes with strophic variations, there are also purely declamatory pieces, as well as compositions with alternating parts in a variety of styles. Furthermore, from a letter of Antonio Goretti from Ferrara to Cornelio Bentivo-

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<sup>40</sup> Cametti, "Orazio Michi" (see n. 12), 228–229.

<sup>41</sup> The accounts for payments to musicians and copyists are missing, as are inventories of works that would have been in their possessions. For the period between 1600 and 1630 very few musical manuscripts survive; for the period between 1630 and 1650, presumably the most prolific for Orazio Michi, they are missing altogether. Cf. Arnaldo Morelli, "Il Tempio Armonico" (see n. 39), 67, 73.

<sup>42</sup> Cametti, "Orazio Michi" (see n. 12), 227–228.

glio dated 9th of May 1640, we know that Michi must have written sonatas for the *arpa doppia*, but unfortunately, they have left no other trace.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to individual works scattered over various manuscripts, most of Michi's pieces are found in three Roman manuscripts. These are: two manuscripts in the Biblioteca Casanatense, 2472 and 2490, and one manuscript in the Biblioteca Nazionale, Mss. mus. 56. The works from outside Rome are generally concordances of the pieces in the Roman manuscripts. These manuscript collections, created in connection with the establishments of the most influential cardinals in Rome at that time, represent an exclusive repertoire whose prestige is owed precisely to their rarity: they were not available in print and therefore not generally accessible. Margaret Murata has shown that Roman patrons of the early 17th century normally paid for musical performances rather than for musical scores, or they employed musicians in their household and did not necessarily pay for individual performances or services. Later, individual musicians would be paid for performances, sometimes specially travelling to Rome from outside. Murata explains the frequent disappearance of sources for the period of 1635 to 1655 as owing to the fact that these sources initially remained in the possession of the composers and often were lost upon their deaths. The passion for collecting which led to professional copying for commercial purposes only started in the late 17th century when patrons no longer employed musicians in their household.<sup>44</sup>

Only five printed arias by Michi have come down to us, and all of them appeared in the collection of spiritual arias *Raccolta d'arie spirituali*, which was compiled by Vincenzo Bianchi and published in 1640. The other composers in this anthology are Loreto Vittori, who was probably a friend of Orazio, Domenico and Virgilio Mazzocchi, Marco Marazzoli, and Luigi Rossi. These pieces do not differ in style from the Roman vocal music of the

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43 Cf. Dinko Fabris, *Mecenati e musicisti: Documenti sul patronato artistico dei Bentivoglio di Ferrara nell'epoca di Monteverdi (1585–1645)*, Lucca: LIM 1999, doc. 1014, 472: “È molto tempo ch'io desidero d'avere due o tre sonate da arpa doppia del S.r Oratio [Michi] dall'arpa, ed havendo fatto molte istanze per diverse bande per haverle, mai è stato possibile ad otenerle.”

44 Cf. Margaret Murata, “La cantata romana fra mecenatismo e collezionismo”, in: *La musica e il mondo: Mecenatismo e committenza musicale in Italia tra '400 e '700*, ed. Claudio Annibaldi, Bologna: Società Editrice il Mulino 1993, 253–266: 257–259.

time, however they all have religious themes and deal with subjects like repentance, penance, the perils of earthly love and the merits of heavenly love. This may be one reason for Michi's underrepresentation in research, since spiritual music in the vernacular has often been excluded from musicological studies. The tendency to classify liturgical genres separately from secular music allows spiritual pieces in the vernacular to slip through the net.

The poetic texts of these pieces are often anonymous or by contemporary poets like Francesco Balducci or Domenico Benigni. In contrast to many of his contemporaries, Orazio Michi did not use any texts from the *laudi spirituali* in the repertoire of the oratory that appeared in print towards the end of the 16th century – with a single exception in Mss. mus. 56 of the Biblioteca Nazionale in Rome. The often stressed affinity of his lyrics to the repertoire of the Oratory consists primarily in their spiritual contents and their Italian language.<sup>45</sup> Below, some of his works will be introduced in more detail, demonstrating some of Michi's stylistic tools and exemplifying the various spiritual topics addressed by Italian-language religious music of the period.

### III.1. Lament for the loss of the beloved: *Sola frà suoi più cari*

One of the most interesting compositions is *Sola frà suoi più cari* which is included in four different sources: in the manuscript at the Biblioteca Nazionale in Rome (I-Rn, Mss. mus. 56, fols. 37v–42r), in the Biblioteca del Conservatorio di Bologna (I-Bc, Q.43, fols. 92r–96r), in the Biblioteca Casanatense in Rome (I-Rc, 2490, fols. 60v–63r) as well as in the source discovered by Alessio Ruffatti in Hamburg (D-Hkm, RAR Bb-17/Italien, fols. 1r–6r). Michi's Lament of Mary is based on a Canzone by Giambattista Marino

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Cametti, "Orazio Michi" (see n. 12), 232 and Arnaldo Morelli, "Il Tempio Armonico" (see n. 40), 73. In the archive of the Oratorians in Rome is located the anonymous "Collinetta che di fiori" for five voices with Basso continuo (I-Rf, F.I.38). Its lyrics are corresponding to the first four strophes of a piece of the manuscript I-Rn, Mss. mus. 56 (fols. 26v–27r), ascribed to Orazio Michi. Cf. Arnaldo Morelli, "Il Tempio Armonico" (see n. 39), 6–77, especially 77, note 226 and Arnaldo Morelli, *Catalogo del fondo musicale delle Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Vittorio Emanuele II di Roma*, Roma: Consorzio IRIS per la Valorizzazione dei Beni Librari 1989, cat. no. 31, 64–67.

(*Lira*, XVII) that he set to music in the form of an expressive, declamatory lament, which in the manuscript of the Biblioteca Casanatense (I-Rc, 2490) is entitled *Lamento della Santissima Vergine*.<sup>46</sup> Several other composers before Michi had drawn on this text, or parts of it, for their compositions:

**Table 1: Music to *Sola frà suoi più cari* by Giovanni Battista Marino**

| Composer               | Year         | Collection   | NV <sup>47</sup> | Voices     | Verses                   | Musical Style    | Place                 |
|------------------------|--------------|--|------------------|------------|--------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Francesco Bianciardi   | 1606         | <i>Canzonette spirituali, libro primo</i>  | 360              | 3vv        | 1–2, 8–11, 14, 23–24     | through-composed | Siena                 |
| Severo Bonini          | 1607<br>1608 | <i>Madrigali, e canzonette spirituali</i>  | 391<br>392       | 1v+bc      | 1–5                      | strophic         | Firenze / Vallombrosa |
| Pietro Pace            | 1619         | [ <i>Il settimo libro de</i> ] motetti [...] <i>et ciascheduno motetto ha una aria spirituale volgare se piace</i> | –                | 2vv<br>+bc | 1–4                      | through-composed | Loreto                |
| Pietro Paolo Sabbatini | 1640         | <i>Canzoni spirituali, libro secondo</i>   | 2512             | 1v+bc      | 1, 19, 20, 22            | strophic         | Rome                  |
| Orazio Michi           |              | I-Rn, Mss. mus. 56<br>I-Rc, 2490<br>I-Bc, Q.43   | –                | 1v+bc      | 1–3, 8–9, 19, 23, 24, 25 | through-composed | Rome                  |
| Luigi Rossi            |              | I-Fn, Magliabechi XIX – lost <sup>48</sup>   | –                | ?          | ?                        | ?                | Rome                  |

<sup>46</sup> The ascriptions and titles differ in the various manuscripts. I-Rn, Mss. mus. 56 contains no composer's name, but is considered by Arnaldo Morelli and John Walter Hill to be an autograph of Michi. I-Rc, 2490 names Michi, I-Bc, Q.43 labels the composition, which bears the title “Pianto di Maria Vergine alla Croce”, as anonymous.

<sup>47</sup> *Nuovo Vogel. Bibliografia della musica italiana vocale profana pubblicata dal 1500 al 1700*, eds. Emil Vogel, Alfred Einstein, Francois Lesure and Claudio Sartori, Pomezia: Staderini-Minkoff 1977.

<sup>48</sup> The Florentine manuscript I-Fn, Magliabechi XIX. 22 has been missing since 1883. Besides one piece by Michi, it must have contained a vocal composition on the same text

Orazio Michi's composition is the only extant example in the style of a declamatory lament. In most of the laments, the heroines are women either lamenting the infidelity or the loss of their beloved in dramatic fashion, as is the case in Claudio Monteverdi's famous *Lamento d'Arianna*. Here, like in the Latin contrafact of Monteverdi's lament, is Mary mourning the death of her beloved son.<sup>49</sup> Mary's direct speech is framed by a narrative (Example 1). The opening of Mary's speech is particularly emotional as she "is weeping and sighing" ("Al fin gemendo e pianse e disse", mm. 50–51) and starting to speak, but all she can utter is "O mio" (m. 53), reminiscent of Ariadne's "O Teseo" by Monteverdi. Then the narrative breaks through once more, explaining that her speech had been interrupted by weeping: "Ma l'inter-rupte il pianto / E non finio" (mm. 54–56). Only then does Mary begin to really speak herself.

There are other elements besides intense dramatic expression stressing the relationship with the type of the lament and the closeness to the classical forsaken heroine represented by Mary's mental state. Mary is not accusing Jesus, as does Ariadne with Theseus, but she is calling for him: "O mio" and "O mio – poscia riprese – figlio" (m. 54 and mm. 57–58). Rather than accus-

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by Luigi Rossi, perhaps also a *lamento*, as Rossi left several of them, some of them spiritual, especially about St. Mary Magdalen. Cf. Bianca Becherini, *Catalogo dei mss. musicali della Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze*, Kassel etc.: Bärenreiter 1959, no. 6, 6. See also Peter Laki, *The madrigals of Giambattista Marino and their settings for solo voice (1602–1640)*, PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania 1989, UMI 9015122, Ann Arbor 1991, 268. Pasquale Ricciardelli considers in his *Repertorio bibliografico-storico delle composizioni del musicista Luigi Rossi* (Cerignola: Banca Popolare Dauna, 1990) the composition in I-Bc, Q.43, which corresponds to the others by Michi, as a concordance to the lost lament of Luigi Rossi, ignoring the concordances with I-Rn, mss. mus. 56 and I-Rc, 2490. For exact details see Eleonora Caluori (*The cantatas of Luigi Rossi. Analysis and thematic index*, PhD dissertation, Brandeis University [MA], 1971, UMI 48106, Ann Arbor 1981, Vol. 2, 91) who describes the lament as a certain work of Rossi.

<sup>49</sup> The presumably first spiritual lament is also based on a text by Giovanni Battista Marino: Claudio Saracini's "Lamento della Madonna" *Sospirava, e spargea*, published in his *Musiche, secondo libro* in "stile recitativo". Later appearing are Magdalen's laments by Luigi Rossi: the contrafact *Un alato messaggero* (original *Un ferito cavaliere*, I-Rc, 2479), *Pender prima non vide* (GB-Oxford Christ Church, Mus. Ms. 998, fol. 79) and *O grotta, o speco, o sasso* (V-CVbac, Chigi Q.IV.18, fol. 69r).

50  
al-fin ge-men-do e pian - - se e dis - se Ò \_\_\_\_ mio,

54  
ma l'in-ter-rup-pe il pian-to, e \_\_\_\_ non fi-ni - o. Ò mi - o po-scia ri - pre-se fi-glio

59  
de la pa - ter - na bel - lez - za i - ma - go e - ter - na,

62  
chi co - stà ti so - spe - se chi \_\_\_\_ t'hà si con - cio

Ex. 1: Orazio Michi: *Sola fra suoi più cari*, mm. 50–64. Source: I-Rn, Mss. mus. 56, fols. 38v–40r. Edition by Alexandra Ziane.

ing him, she asks him who has so tormented him: “Who has hanged you there” (“Chi costà ti sospese?”, mm. 62–63), “Who has beaten you so?” (“Chi t’hà si concio?”, mm. 63–64), “What was your grave and mortal sin?” (“O quale tua nò si grave fù colpa mortale?”, mm. 65–67). Finally, Mary also wishes to die (“che teco io mora”, mm. 73–76) – a central theme of all laments – because she cannot live without him. The customary enumerative call on different elements of nature to suffer with the abandoned woman is here replaced by a call on the agonies and instruments of the Passion. “Quei ferri acuti, e rei / quell’aspre piaghe e quei dolor son mei. / La croce, dunque I chiodi / cedi à questa infelice.” (m. 91 ff.). Here, the anguish Mary is suffering is also caused by Jesus, who is leaving her, as she wishes to take upon herself his agony, to

feel in his stead the cross and the nails. There are undertones of self-pity and self-contempt when Mary calls herself an unworthy mother (“indegna genitrice”). In the end, the Mother of God appeals to her son once more and asks him whether he is not hearing her. Whilst in other laments, the protagonist herself is bereft of her vital force, here it is Jesus who is dying, and in a figurative sense, Mary is dying with him, having once more expressed the wish that heaven shut its eyes before the cruel spectacle, and reproach an ungrateful earth (“ingratissima terra”) on which lies prostrate the extinguished body of Christ. At this point, just before the end of direct speech, the harmony, having moved through a range of emotional and harmonic modes (a, C, a, F, E, C, E, a, E, A, d), returns to d, the initial key, and with the roar of the earth, Mary falls silent (“e la terra si scosse et ella tacque”).

### **Sola fra suoi più cari<sup>50</sup>**

*Sola fra suoi più cari  
à piè del figlio afflitto  
tormentato e trafitto  
da mille stratij amari  
sconsolata Maria  
Qual tortorella vedova languia.*

*Stava l'addolorata,  
al duro tronco appresso  
à par del tronco istesso  
immobile insensata  
in piè reggeala amore,  
e sosteneala in vita il suo dolore.*

*Tutta struggeasi in pianto,  
mirando Ahi scempio crudo  
insanguinato ignudo  
Ignudo se non quanto*

*Alone among her dearest ones,  
at the feet of her son, afflicted,  
tormented, and cut  
by a thousand bitter wounds,  
the inconsolable Maria,  
that widowed turtledove, languished.*

*She stood grief-stricken  
near the hard trunk,  
herself like the same trunk,  
immobile, insensate,  
kept upright by Love  
and kept alive by her very pain.*

*She dissolved in tears  
seeing, oh cruel image,  
the naked bleeding one  
naked, except for the*

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<sup>50</sup> To distinguish direct from indirect speech, the indirect speech is put in italics. The translation of the poem is borrowed from Margret Murata, “Cantar ottave, cantar storie”, in: *Word, image and song*, Vol. 1: *Essays on early modern Italy*, ed. Rebecca Cypess, Beth L. Glixon and Nathan Link, New York: University of Rochester Press 2013, 287–317: 311–313.



*d'un nero velo ombroso  
cinto l'havea d'intorno il ciel pietoso.*

*Lungo spatio tacendo  
al suo dolor si dolse,  
pur lo spirito sciolse  
in voce alfin gemendo  
e pianse e disse Ò mio,  
ma l'interruppe il pianto, e non finio.*

*Ò mio poscia riprese  
figlio de la paterna  
bellezza imago eterna,  
chi costà ti sospese  
chi t'hà si concio ò quale  
tua nò si grave fù colpa mortale,*

*Figlio induggia il morire,  
ritien lo spirto ancora  
tanto che teco io mora  
che 'n si grave martire  
di cor', d'anima priva  
com'esser può, che senza vita io viva*

*À te ch'errar non puoi  
pena già non conviensi  
questi tormenti immensi  
Misera non son tuoi  
quei ferri acuti, e rei  
quell'aspre piaghe e quei dolor son miei,*

*La croce, dunque i chiodi  
cedi à questa infelice  
indegna genitrice  
figlio figlio non m'odi  
lassa già chini il volto  
già morte i sensi il ragionar t'ha tolto*

*Per non mirarlo serra  
il ciel gl'occhi sereni,  
Mà tù come sostieni  
ingratissima terra?  
*Qui Christo estinto giaeque,  
e la terra si scosse, et ella tacque.**

*dark black veil with which  
Heaven mercifully surrounded him.*

*For a long time she grieved,  
silent about her pain.  
Then her spirit loosened at last,  
in trembling voice  
she wept and said, O my,  
but her tears interrupted and she did not finish.*

*O my, she then began again,  
my son, eternal image  
of fatherly beauty,  
who has hung you there?  
who has reduced you to this? O what  
no, not yours was such a mortal sin?*

*Son, delay death,  
keep your spirit alive  
until I may die with you,  
because such is the terrible torment  
of the heart of a soul bereaved,  
how could it be that without life I live?*

*You, who could never hurt  
anyone, how can you bear  
these immense torments?  
Miserable me, they are not yours  
these sharp cruel irons;  
those harsh wounds and those pains are mine.*

*Yield then your Cross and the nails  
to this unhappy woman,  
this unworthy mother.  
Son, son, do you not hear me?  
Alas, he already bends his head;  
Death has already taken his senses and reason.*

*In order not to see him, Heaven  
shuts its blue eyes.  
But you, how can you hold him up,  
ungrateful Earth?  
*Now Christ lay lifeless,  
and the earth moved, and she fell silent.**



In spite of the strophic form of the text, with rhyme scheme *abbacC* for the stanzas, Michi's *Lamento* is purely declamatory and through-composed and not strophic (as in the style that would prevail in the history of music later on) or with reiterative elements.<sup>51</sup> Emphatic pauses interrupt the song, giving the impression that the grief-stricken protagonist is struggling for breath. Expressions around weeping, sighing and cries of despair ("ahi") are underlined by chromatic alterations (e.g. from *c''* to *c#''* for "sconsolata", mm. 9–10) and by melismata, and dotted notes and dissonances bring out the dramatic character of the situation. The term "languia" (m. 14), for example, is emphasised by a melisma as well as the punctuated moving back and forth of the melody between *g#'* and *a'*, clearly in dissonance with the bass chords on the longer notes (*g#'* above D minor and *a'* above E major).

Michi was engaged from 1623 to 1630 in the household of Cardinal Maurizio of Savoy at the same time as Sigismondo d'India, and it may well be that he studied the numerous published laments of his colleague, who set to them music in recitative form using texts of his own.<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, in 1623, Giovanni Battista Marino, the poet who wrote the lyrics of *Sola frà suoi più cari*, was himself with his old patron from the house of Savoy in Rome.<sup>53</sup> In the same year, Monteverdi's *Lamento d'Arianna* finally appeared in print in solo form. One of the manuscripts containing Michi's Lament of Mary also includes a contrafact of Monteverdi's *Lamento d'Arianna* in Italian, changed to a *Lamento della Maddalena*.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Margaret Murata points out to some elements that structure the through-composed form nevertheless, for example the similar beginning of the first and second stanza. She also analyses how Michi differentiates harmonically between the narrator and Mary's direct speech. Murata, "Cantar ottave, cantar storie" (see n. 50), 303–310.

<sup>52</sup> The laments of Apollo, Orpheus, Jason, Dido and Olympia in Sigismondo d'India's *Musiche libro quarto* of 1621 and *Musiche libro quinto* of 1623.

<sup>53</sup> James V. Mirollo, *The poet of the marvelous: Giambattista Marino*, New York: Columbia University Press 1963, 86.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Linda Maria Koldau, "Non sit quid volo sed fiat quod tibi placet": I 'contrafacta' sacri del *Lamento d'Arianna* di Claudio Monteverdi, in: *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 36 (2001/2002), 281–307.

### III.2. The penitent singer : *Tempo fù che sovente*

In addition to the lament *Sola fra suoi più cari*, in Michi's œuvre there are also strophic canzonettas that are song-like throughout and are set to new verse forms such as *ottonari* and *quaternari*. However, what particularly characterises most of Michi's compositions is that they consist of different, declamatory and aria-like parts, similarly to the cantata, which develops during that period. Sometimes the rhyme scheme of the text may create the right conditions, so *settenari* and *endecasillabi* are set in declamatory style, while *ottonari* and *quaternari* are set in an aria-like style.

The poem *Tempo fù che sovente*, set to music by Michi for soprano and basso continuo (I-Rc, 2472 and D-Hkm, RAR Bb-17/Italien), consists of three stanzas, with an occasional *ottonari* couplet being inserted between the *settenari* and *endecasillabi*, and an *endecasillabo* for a refrain at the end.<sup>55</sup> The music (see Appendix, p. 270) echoes this, as the piece begins in declamatory style, whilst the music for the *ottonari* (m. 19) switches to a song-like triple time. The *endecasillabi* that follow in the last two verses are set to simple time again, though the refrain ("Alma che segue Amor degna è di pianto", m. 42) changes to a more song-like style with a lyrical and ornate melody and walking bass.<sup>56</sup>

#### *Tempo fù che sovente*. Text, rhyme scheme, and music time

| First stanza of the text               | Rhyme scheme | Music time |
|--|--------------|------------|
| Tempo fù che sovente                   | a            | C          |
| cantai sù cetra d'or fiamme d'Amore    | B            | C          |
| e spogliai di rigore                   | b            | C          |
| al suon de sospir miei gelida mente.   | A            | C          |
| Hor pentita à più bel segno            | c8           | 3          |
| offro 'l cor sacro l'ingegno           | c8           | 3          |
| e là rivolgo ossequiosa il canto       | D            | C          |
| Alma che segue Amor degna è di pianto. | D – Refrain  | C          |

<sup>55</sup> See also Alexandra Ziane, *Amor divino – Amor profano. Liebe in geistlicher Musik und bildender Kunst in Rom um 1600*, Paderborn et. al.: Schöningh 2011, 172–174.

<sup>56</sup> At the same time Michi partly obscures even the basic time, building three pairs of two *minime* each.

The subject of the piece is essentially the singing itself. The lyrical self regrets having sung love songs to the accompaniment of the “cetra d’or”, a golden lyre or cittern, in the past. Yet, in spite of its regret of the past, it won’t stop singing, instead turning to celestial beauty (last verse: “beltà celeste”), as opposed to the earthly beauty that brings perdition. The refrain represents the song that the lyrical self sings after its conversion: the soul pursuing earthly love is to be pitied (“Alma che segue amor degna è di pianto”). Thus, the change from simple time to the “perfect” triple time not only fits in with the lyrics, but also with contrasts, with its subject matter, the worldly life of the past (duple time) and the conversion (triple time).<sup>57</sup>

Giovenale Ancina describes a similar case of a singer devoting her voice to God alone, in his *Tempio armonico*, a collection of Oratorian *laudi* published in 1600. Immediately after explaining how he planned to eradicate lascivious music in Italy through his contrafacts and alternative compositions, Ancina mentions the case of a “Sirena Napolitana”, who only three years earlier had been notorious for singing self-accompanied secular *canzoni*, yet had dedicated her voice and her *clavicembalo* to God shortly afterwards.<sup>58</sup>

Eventually the beautiful singer whose love songs had once evoked lasciviousness, but who had then turned to God, dedicating her music and her love to Him alone, also appears in contemporary poetry. For example, in 1637 Pietro Francesco Paoli, who was working in Rome, includes this kind of sonnet in his *Rime varie* of 1637 – one of them titled: “Bella Cantatrice si fa

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<sup>57</sup> With the announcement of the new song, “e là rivolgo ossequiosa il canto”, the music begins to display declamatory characteristics which also differ from the following refrain, though in duple time as well, that enunciates the proverbial singing of the lyrical self. These changes, corresponding to the content, work equally well with the content of the lyrics of the following two stanzas. Margret Murata observes similar changes of time in interpreting the before and after of the penitent lyrical self for a composition of Domenico Mazzocchi. Cf. Margaret Murata, “‘Singing’, ‘acting’, and ‘dancing’ in vocal chamber music of the early Seicento”, in: *Journal of seventeenth century music* 9/1, 2003, paragraph 9.1., [www.sscm-jscm.org/jscm/v9/no1/murata.html](http://www.sscm-jscm.org/jscm/v9/no1/murata.html) (20.11.2018).

<sup>58</sup> *Tempio armonico della Beatissima Vergine N. S.*, compiled by Giovenale Ancina, Rome: Nicolo Mutij 1599 (RISM 1599<sup>6</sup>), preface/dedication to the Cardinal of Como.

Monaca". The nun, who is the subject of the poem, now plays her stringed instrument, described as "legni sonori", behind convent walls.<sup>59</sup>

Women who made music in public were frowned upon in Rome. Performances in public were prohibited altogether, taking place only in the private sphere. Nevertheless, some female singers became famous in Rome, in particular Adriana Basile Baroni, with whom Orazio Michi performed together,<sup>60</sup> as well as Adriana's daughters Caterina and Leonora. Caterina Baroni, singer, harpist, and poetess, to whom Domenico Benigni, among others, dedicated a poem of homage, entered the Roman convent of Santa Lucia in Selci in 1640, henceforth calling herself Suora Costanza. According to Pietro Della Valle<sup>61</sup> and others, the convent was widely known for the beautiful singing of its nuns. Therefore, we can assume that Caterina Baroni continued to make music in the convent. Another fact strengthens this assumption: Michi bequeathed two of his harps to Caterina upon his death in 1641, when she had already taken the veil.<sup>62</sup> His composition *Tempo fù che sovente*, then, could be directly linked to Caterina Baroni. There is a similar story about the composer Paolo Quagliati, who bequeathed his spinet to the sisters of Santa Lucia in Selci<sup>63</sup>; Quagliati may have been teaching music at the convent of Santa Lucia in Selci. Moreover, Quagliati's *Affetti amorosi spirituali* of 1617 – also a purely spiritual collection in Italian – is dedicated to a nun of the same convent.

<sup>59</sup> Pietro Paoli, *Rime varie*, Rome: Per il Corbelletti 1637, 281.

<sup>60</sup> Antonio Vincenzo Averoldi from Rome to Enzo Bentivoglio in Ferrara, 8 May 1620: "Oggi [il Cardinal d'] Este è stato col Sig.<sup>r</sup> Cardinal Padrone [Ludovico Ludovisi] alla vigna con Adriana [Basile] e [Orazio Michi dell'] arpa del S.<sup>r</sup> Francesco [Borghese]. Di promozione s'aspettano più luoghi [...]" Cf. Fabris, *Mecenati e Musicisti* (see n. 43), Doc. 735, 377. Either it should be "del S.<sup>r</sup> Francesco [Barberini]", or this would be an indication that Michi was also in the service of Francesco Borghese!

<sup>61</sup> Della Valle, "Della musica dell'età nostra" (see n. 8), 164–166.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Cametti, "Orazio Michi" (see n. 12), 257–258.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Kimberlyn Winona Montford, *Music in the convents of Counter-Reformation Rome*, PhD dissertation, Rutgers University (New Brunswick/NJ) 1999, 87–88 und Ann Margaret Rorke, *The spiritual madrigals of Paolo Quagliati and Antonio Cifra*, PhD dissertation, University of Michigan 1980, 46.

### III.3. The mystical experience of Filippo Neri and Teresa of Avila: *Si dilegua e si distrugge*

Michi dedicated at least two pieces of music to Saint Teresa of Avila. He composed the pieces in the period between the canonisation of Teresa in 1622. The first, *Che legge è questa o Dio* from Ms. 2472 in the Biblioteca Casanatense (fols. 31v–32v), describes the doubts assailing Teresa as to whether her visions were genuine, since she was afraid they might have arisen from her great longing.

*Si dilegua e si distrugge* is about another mystical experience of Saint Teresa: levitation, spiritual elevation. Teresa, in the raptures of heavenly love, feels herself lifted up from the ground and rising heavenward – as she herself describes it, like evaporated water being drawn upwards by the sun into a cloud. It is interesting to note that *Si dilegua e si distrugge* appears in two different manuscripts, in I-Rc, 2490 and I-Rn, Mss. mus. 56, leading us back to Orazio's connection with the Philippine Oratory: in the manuscript of the Biblioteca Nazionale, music and text are nearly unchanged, but the word "Teresa" was replaced by "Filippo" – a plausible option, since there were descriptions of levitations in front of eyewitnesses also for Neri, and since Neri's canonisation took place in the same year as that of Teresa, in 1622.

#### ***Si dilegua e si distrugge*. Text, rhyme scheme, music time, and translation**

|                              |    |   |  |
|------------------------------|----|---|--|
| Si dilegua e si distrugge    | a8 | C | Pining away, consumed                    |
| à Teresa il cor nel seno     | b8 | C | Is the heart in Teresa's breast          |
| se ne vola se ne fugge       | a8 | 3 | She takes flight and escapes             |
| alle stelle al ciel sereno   | b8 | 3 | To the stars in the limpid sky           |
| spiega l'ali del desio       | c8 | 3 | She spreads the wings of desire          |
| fugge al cielo e vola a Dio. | c8 | 3 | And flees to the heavens, flying to God. |

*Si dilegua e si distrugge* consists of a single strophe of *ottonari*. The text would therefore not demand a division into different sections – or if, that would be suggested only between verse 1–4 and the last two verses consisting of a rhyming couplet. However, Michi is guided by the meaning of the text: having set the first two verses to simple time in an expressive declamatory style (at least at the start) he changes to triple time at the words "se ne vola"

which describe flying, the ascent of the saint (Ex. 2). The flowing, rising movement of the melody brings out the words more clearly until, after several repetitions of the verse, with the last “vola à Dio”, the time goes back to duple again. At this point Teresa really seems to float away: while the bass rises chromatically from *B* via *c* and *c*<sup>#</sup> to *d*, the soprano glides from *c*' to *a*'' in an unbroken line. The accelerating tempo in the rhythm of the upper part heightens the vanishing effect.

As with the piece about the reformed singer, a performance in a convent as well as in the Philippine Oratory would logically follow for a composition about Saint Teresa. Indeed, many of the *laudi* in the collections of the Oratory from the end of the 16th century contain texts evoking Saint Teresa's image. Philippine spirituality was very close to that of St. Teresa. In this respect, the key figure must be Francisco Soto de Langa (1564–1619): He not only published five collections of *laudi*, but also translated texts by Spanish mystics into Italian, amongst them the *Camino di perfettione* and the *Castillo interior* by Teresa of Avila. Further, de Langa founded the first monastery of the Barefoot Carmelites in Rome (San Giuseppe in Via Capo le Case).<sup>64</sup>

## Conclusion

Orazio Michi enjoyed a high esteem amongst his contemporaries, being doubtlessly one of the greatest virtuosi of his time, and a pioneer of the cantata. But today the knowledge about his life and œuvre is painfully scant.

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. Andrea Adami, *Osservazioni per ben regolare il coro de i cantori della Cappella Pontificia*, Rome: per Antonio de' Rossi alla Piazza di Ceri 1711, 176–177. One of the Spanish *laudi* of the third book of *laudi* by Francisco Soto, *No ves mi Dios*, attributed to Juan Navarro, a contrafact of the profane *No ves amor*, deals with a celestial arrow much like what appears in Michi's *Si dilegua*. The original *villancico* is contained, anonymously, in Rome, Biblioteca Medinaceli, Ms. 13230, fols. 136v–147v. Concerning the connection of the Philippine Oratorio with Spain, which could have been partly responsible for the propagation of the mystical experiences of Teresa in Rome, see: Alexandra Ziane, “Spanische Komponisten am Oratorium des Filippo Neri in Rom”, Bericht zur Tagung *Im Schatten Palestrinas? Tomas Luis de Victoria – Werk und Rezeption*, Bremen 2009, in preparation.





EX. 2: Orazio Michi: Last section of *Si dilegua e distrugge*. Source: I-Rc, 2490, p. 98. © Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense.

Further research is needed into whether Michi's extant and largely spiritual compositions indeed represent the core of his *œuvre*, or whether it is purely by chance that these compositions are the only ones that have survived. It is not clear whether Michi has produced only small vocal compositions, or whether he has also written larger works for other instruments and voices, or for use in the liturgy, that now survive anonymously. This means that questions formulated by Alberto Cametti at the end of his essay in 1914 need to be asked once again today.



## Appendix

Orazio Michi: *Tempo fu che sovente*. Source: I-Rc, 2472, p. 87–88.  
Edition by Alexandra Ziane

Tem-po fù che so-ven-te can - tai sù ce-tra d'or fiam - - -

5 - me d'A - mo - re e spo-gliai di ri - go - re Al suon de so-spir miei

10 ge - li-da men - te e spo-gliai di ri-go - re Al

15 suon de so-spir miei ge - li-da men - te 3 Hor pen - ti - ta à

21 più bel se - gno Hor pen - ti - ta à più bel se - gno of-fr'il

29 cor sa - cro l'in - ge - gno of-fr'il cor of-fr'il cor sa -

37

- cro \_ l'in - ge - gno e là ri-vol-go os-se-qui-o - sa il can - to Al-

43

- ma che se - g'a - mor \_\_\_\_\_ de - gn'è di pian - to Al-

48

- ma che se - g'a - mor \_\_\_\_\_ de - gna è \_\_\_\_\_ di pian - to.

