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# Italian music at the Court of Queen Christina

## Christ Church, Oxford, Mus. MS 377 and the visit of Vincenzo Albrici's Italian ensemble, 1652–54

by Geoffrey Webber

The visit of an ensemble of musicians led by Vincenzo Albrici to the Court of Queen Christina of Sweden in the two years before her abdication in 1654 is well known. Detailed information survives concerning the names and musical occupations of the musicians, as well as the length of time each individual remained in Sweden.<sup>1</sup> However, the nature of the Italian music performed at Christina's Court, either by the Italian ensemble itself or by her own regular company of musicians, has remained largely obscure. This article considers the evidence of a manuscript now in England in the Library of Christ Church, Oxford, and re-examines the history of the early Italian music in the Düben collection, suggesting that more music contained in the collection may have come to Sweden with the Italian ensemble than has previously been thought.

Hitherto, only one example of the vocal repertory of the Italian ensemble has been described – a manuscript in the Royal Library in Stockholm.<sup>2</sup> This contains secular works by composers including Luigi Rossi, Giacomo Carissimi and M.A. Pasqualini – all composers who were active in Rome, from whence the Italian ensemble was gathered. But a second example of the repertory of the Italian ensemble survives in the library of Christ Church, Oxford: Mus. MS 377. On the upper cover of the manuscript there is an inscription which is unusually rich in detail, reading as follows:

Musica del Signor Angelo Micheli  
Uno de Musici della Capella  
de Reyna di Swecia  
Upsaliae Martii 21

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1. See E. Kjellberg, 'Kungliga musiker i Sverige under stormaktstiden: Studier kring deras organisation, verksamheter och status, ca 1620 – ca 1720' (Diss., University of Uppsala, 1979), p. 725, and E. Sundström, 'Notiser om drottning Kristinas italienska musiker', *Svensk tidskrift för musikforskning*, xliii (1961), 297.
  2. G. Larsson, 'Stockholm – stormaktstidens musikcentrum', *Kultur och samhälle i stormaktstidens Sverige* (Stockholm, 1967), p. 135.

1653  
a 2 et 3 voce

Micheli, whose full name was Angelo Micheli Bartolotti, was a theorbo player from Bologna in Albrici's ensemble.<sup>3</sup> The manuscript has sixty-eight folios, containing twenty secular works written in score, with sixteen for two voices and continuo and three for three voices and continuo.<sup>4</sup> Despite the phrase 'Musica del Signor Angelo Micheli', it does not appear that the music in the manuscript was composed by Micheli. All the works are anonymous in the manuscript itself, but many of the works have been identified through concordances with other manuscripts. Nine of the works are by Luigi Rossi, two by Antonio Cesti and one – the longest work in the manuscript – by Giacomo Carissimi, his cantata 'Sciolto havean dall' alte sponde'. Christ Church, Mus. MS 377 thus confirms the impression made by the Stockholm manuscript described by Gunnar Larsson that the Italian ensemble came to Sweden equipped with contemporary Italian secular music, mostly written by Roman composers. It is also possible that another manuscript in Christ Church – Mus. MS 996 – may be connected with the Italian ensemble in Sweden. This manuscript is written in the same Italian hand as Mus. MS 377, and contains a similar repertory of music by Carissimi and Rossi, including three concordances. Although there is no evidence of a Swedish provenance in Mus. MS 996, the fact that the two manuscripts share the same scribe and general repertory suggests that they share a common origin. Some consideration will now be given to the history of Christ Church, Mus. MS 377, including its advent in Oxford. The inscription on the upper cover of the manuscript indicates clearly that it was in Uppsala in March 1653. However, it is less certain when and by what means the manuscript found its way to Oxford. It is well known that a number of musicians in Queen Christina's Italian ensemble continued to work in Northern Europe after the ensemble was disbanded in 1654, and it is possible that one of these musicians may have brought the manuscript to England. Some are known to have come to England, including the leader of the ensemble, Vincenzo Albrici. However, the most likely candidate is the tenor Pietro Reggio. Reggio came to England in 1664, and we know from comments made by Samuel Pepys in his diary of that year that he brought with him contemporary Italian music, including music by Carissimi.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the historian John Hawkins, in his *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music* (London, 1853), states that Reggio actually lived in Oxford. Although Gloria Rose has challenged this claim, a comment by Reggio himself in the introduction to a collection of songs published in 1680 makes it clear that he had spent a considerable time in Oxford, where he met with 'Persons very considerable'.<sup>6</sup> But perhaps a more likely

3. See E. Sundström, *op. cit.*, 297.

4. A new catalogue of music manuscripts at Christ Church, Oxford, is currently being prepared by John Milsom.

5. See G. Rose, 'Pietro Reggio – A Wandering Musician', *Music and Letters*, xlvii (1965), 21 1.

explanation of the manuscript's presence in Oxford lies not in the travel of members of the Italian ensemble to England, but in the presence in Sweden of the English Ambassador Bulstrode Whitelocke during the visit of the Italian ensemble.

Whitelocke was one of the more musical members of Queen Christina's Court circle. His published journal of the Embassy to Sweden contains a number of references to musical occasions he attended there, and some of these make specific mention of the Queen's Italian ensemble. On February 8th 1653 Whitelocke was invited to the Court 'to hear her Majesty's music, which was very rare, and performed by divers Italian eunuchs and others...'.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, in the following month, on March 27th, Whitelocke himself entertained the Italian musicians to dinner at his residence at Uppsala, and in gratitude the guests gave Whitelocke a 'book of their songs'.<sup>8</sup> It is possible that Christ Church, Mus. MS 377 may have been this very gift. In addition to the inscription on the upper cover of Christ Church, Mus. MS 377, there is a similar inscription on the flyleaf of the manuscript, written in a different hand. Whilst the inscription on the upper cover begins 'Musica del Signor Angelo Micheli', the inscription on the flyleaf has the more revealing phrase 'Dal dono del Signor Angelo Micheli', indicating that the manuscript was part of a gift from Micheli. Since the music in the manuscript does not appear to have been composed by Micheli himself, this mention of a gift from Micheli explains the presence of his name in the inscription on the upper cover. Thus it seems certain the manuscript was a gift from Micheli, given to its recipient in Uppsala. Whitelocke's diary records that he received the book of songs from the Italians in Uppsala on 27th March, but both the inscriptions in the Christ Church manuscript are clearly dated 21st March 1653 (the digit '1' in the date '21' is written as a single vertical stroke, and so cannot be confused with a '7'). Even if the Christ Church manuscript is not the precise book given to Whitelocke on the 27th, it certainly gives an indication of the type of manuscript given to him. If Christ Church, Mus. MS 377 did indeed come into the possession of the English Embassy in Sweden, there is little difficulty in explaining the manuscript's arrival in Oxford within the next few years.<sup>9</sup> Whitelocke already knew Oxford well as an undergraduate at St. John's College, where he had matriculated in 1620, and on his return from Sweden he was elected to represent the City of Oxford in Parliament. Whitelocke's

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6. *Ibid.*, 215.

7. Sir Bulstrode Whitelocke, *A Journal of the Swedish Embassy in the Years 1653 and 1654*, i (London, 1772, repr. 1855), p. 405.

8. *Ibid.*, ii, p. 64.

9. We cannot be sure when Christ Church, Mus. MS 377 arrived in Oxford, but Christ Church, Mus. MS 996, which, as noted above, was written by the same scribe as Mus. MS 377 and contains a similar repertory, has two inscriptions by Oxford residents dated 1672.

chaplain and musical director in Sweden, Nathaniel Ingelo, also had strong connections with Oxford. He took to Sweden some instrumental music by Benjamin Rogers, the Informator Choristarum at Magdalen College, and organised the performance of Rogers's music before the Queen herself. Moreover, Ingelo received the degree of D.D. from Oxford in 1658. Some music by Rogers survives to this day at Uppsala, having travelled in the opposite direction to Christ Church, Mus. MS 377.<sup>10</sup>

The repertory of Christ Church, Mus. MS 377 expands our knowledge of the music of the Albrici's Italian ensemble, and also raises the question of how much additional music may have been brought by the ensemble to Sweden. In addition to the Christ Church and Stockholm manuscripts of secular vocal music, there is a copy in Düben's hand of an instrumental work by Albrici, his *Sinfonia* (Uppsala, Universitetsbiblioteket, Instr. mus. i hdskr. 1:1), dated 1654. But did the Italian ensemble bring only secular music with them, or did they bring sacred music as well? It is well known that the large majority of the manuscripts in the Düben collection of sacred music were copied after Gustav Düben's appointment as leader of the Swedish Hofkapelle in 1663. However, Bruno Grusnick has already suggested that two of the sacred works in the collection copied by Düben himself can be confidently dated to the period of the Albrici ensemble. These are: V. Albrici, *Fader vår* (Vok.mus. i hdskr. 1:6) and V. Albrici, *Laboravi clamans* (Vok.mus. i hdskr. 1:11)<sup>11</sup>. Grusnick's reasons for associating these manuscripts of works by Albrici with the period of the Italian ensemble are entirely convincing. First, there is the appearance of a Swedish text. Second, the style of Düben's script is similar to that of his copy of Albrici's *Sinfonia* (Instr.mus. i hdskr. 1:1), as well as one of his own instrumental works, both of which are dated 1654. Third, there is the use of description 'Romano' with reference to Albrici on the title pages of the manuscripts, a description which is not found in later copies of his music.

Although the Italian ensemble was employed primarily for secular music, the manuscript copies of Albrici's two sacred works *Fader vår* and *Laboravi clamans* demonstrate that the Italian ensemble was involved to some extent with sacred as well as secular music at the Swedish Court. Indeed, it seems likely that Albrici composed *Fader vår* specifically for performance in Sweden by the Hofkapelle. The Hofkapelle maintained a full complement of Swedish and German musicians during the visit of

10. See R. Rastall, 'Benjamin Rogers (1614–1698): Some Notes on his Instrumental Music', *Music and Letters*, xlvii (1965), 238.

11. B. Grusnick, 'Die Dübensammlung. Ein Versuch ihrer chronologischen Ordnung', *Svensk tidskrift för musikforskning*, xlviii (1966), 70. For a more full discussion of the origins of the Italian music in the Düben collection see Chapter Eight of my thesis 'A study of Italian influence on North German church and organ music in the second half of the seventeenth century, with special reference to the collection of Gustav Düben' (Diss., University of Oxford, 1988), p. 211.

the Italian ensemble, so it is unlikely that any of the Italian musicians took part in the performance of sacred music at Court. However, the manuscript copies of Albrici's *Fader vår* and *Laboravi clamans* suggest that they may well have supplied the Hofkapelle with copies of Italian sacred works for them to perform. Although these two manuscripts are the only copies of Italian sacred music which Grusnick assigns to the period of the Italian ensemble, I would suggest that considerably more Italian sacred works in the Düben collection may have been brought from Rome to Sweden by the Italian ensemble. In his application for the post of Hofkapellmeister in 1663, Düben stated that he had travelled in the past "i fremmande länder på åtskilliga orter",<sup>12</sup> and Grusnick has suggested that Düben himself may have travelled to Italy and brought Italian music back to Sweden in the years immediately preceding his application.<sup>13</sup> However, recent research by Erik Kjellberg and Bengt Kyhlberg has given definition to Düben's vague statement, and suggests that Düben's foreign trips took place as early as the mid-1640's and encompassed Germany and France, but not Italy.<sup>14</sup>

There exists within the Düben collection a considerable quantity of sacred music by Roman composers active in the period prior to 1652, thus corresponding closely to the known repertory of secular music brought by the ensemble. Much, if not all, of this repertory was probably brought to Sweden by the Italian ensemble. The composers represented include Francesco Foggia, Giacomo Carissimi and Orazio Benevoli. In addition to containing music by the leader of the Italian ensemble Vincenzo Albrici, the repertory also includes the only known composition by another member of the ensemble, A. Cecconi. Both Albrici and Cecconi worked during the late 1640's at the German College in Rome, where the *maestro di cappella* was Carissimi, and it is notable that Carissimi's music holds a prominent place in both the secular manuscripts associated with the Italian ensemble in Sweden and the sacred repertory that will now be discussed. Three particular groups of manuscripts may be identified: the Foggia manuscripts, the partbooks Vok.mus. i hdskr. 53:10, and a group of manuscripts containing works by Carissimi and Albrici.

The first group of manuscripts contains the earliest dated Italian music in the Düben collection. The copies of Francesco Foggia's *Laetantes canite* (Vok.mus. i hdskr. 23:10) and *Celebrate o fideles* (Vok.mus. i hdskr. 23:2), written by an Italian scribe, are both dated 1646. In addition, there are manuscript copies of another nine works by Foggia in the Düben collection, all of which are copied in the same Italian hand as the dated manuscripts.<sup>15</sup> Foggia, one of the leading Roman composers of the period, became *maestro di cappella* at St. John Lateran in Rome in December 1646, and at

12. G. Larsson, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

13. B. Grusnick, 'Die Dübensammlung. Ein Versuch ihrer chronologischen Ordnung', *Svensk tidskrift för musikkforskning*, xlv (1964), 32.

14. See E. Kjellberg, 'The Royal Swedish Court and Music During the Schütz-Era: A Short Survey', in *Heinrich Schütz und die Musik in Dänemark zur Zeit Christians IV.* Kongressbericht (Kopenhagen, 1987), pp. 28–29.

least two of the Italian copies of his works which survive in Sweden were copied in the same year.

The second group of manuscripts comprises the partbooks Vok.mus. i hdskr. 53:10a, 53:10b and 53:10c. These contain 26 sacred works exclusively by Roman composers: O. Benevoli (3 works), G. Capponi (1), G. Carissimi (15), A. Cecconi (1), A. Cifra (2), F. Foggia (3) and V. Tozzi (1). Cecconi was a member of Albrici's ensemble, and the presence of his only surviving work in the partbooks suggests a close link between the ensemble and the origin of the partbooks. Grusnick has dated the set of partbooks "in dem Zeitraum um und nach 1657",<sup>16</sup> but more recently Erik Kjellberg has placed them in the period "um 1655–1657".<sup>17</sup> Kjellberg has identified the scribe of the partbooks as Friedrich Scharle, a member of the Swedish Hofkapelle from 1639 until his death in 1673.<sup>18</sup> Scharle, like Düben, would have worked in close proximity to the Italian ensemble during Christina's reign. Even if the manuscripts were copied after the departure of the Italian ensemble in 1654, it seems likely that the repertory they contain was brought to Sweden by the Roman musicians.

The third group of manuscripts contains works by the leader of the ensemble, Vincenzo Albrici, and further works by the most famous Italian musician of the time, Giacomo Carissimi. In addition to the two works by Albrici mentioned above, Grusnick's chronology of the Düben collection includes two further works by Albrici in the 1650's: *Laudate pueri* (Vok.mus. i hdskr. 47:7) and *In convertendo Dominus* (Vok.mus. i hdskr. 1:10).<sup>19</sup> The manuscript of *Laudate pueri* is particularly interesting as it shares the same style of decorated initial as that found in the Oxford and Stockholm manuscripts of Roman secular music. Decorated initials are extremely rare in the Düben collection, and the similarity is thus all the more striking. The same Italian style of script can also be found in copies of four works by Carissimi: *Caro factum facta* (Vok.mus. i hdskr. 11:5), *Gaudeat terra* (Vok.mus. i hdskr. 11:12), *Sacerdotes Dei* (Vok.mus. i hdskr. 45:9) and *Super flumina* (Vok.mus. i hdskr. 12:3).

15. These are Vok.mus. i hdskr. 23:1 (*Beatus vir*), 23:3 (*Confitebor tibi Domine*), 23:4 (*Dixit Dominus*), 23:5 (*Egredemini addicti*), 23:6 (*Excelsi luminis*), 43:1 (*Laeta nobis*), 23:8 (*Laudate Dominum*), 23:9 (*Laudate pueri*) and 23:11 (*Magnificat anima mea*).

16. B. Grusnick, 'Die Dübensammlung. Ein Versuch ihrer chronologischen Ordnung', *Svensk tidskrift för musikforskning*, xlviii (1966), 71.

17. E. Kjellberg, 'Über Inhalt und Bedeutung der Instrumentalmusik in der Düben-Sammlung: Zur Geschichte der schwedischen Hofkapelle in Buxtehudes Zeit', in *Dietrich Buxtehude und die europäische Musik seiner Zeit. Bericht über das Lübecker Symposium 1987* (Kassel, 1990), p. 177.

18. *Ibid.*

19. B. Grusnick, 'Die Dübensammlung. Ein Versuch ihrer chronologischen Ordnung', *Svensk tidskrift för musikforskning*, xlviii (1966), 75.

In addition to bringing manuscript copies of Italian music to Sweden, it is also likely that the Italian ensemble may have brought some printed music. Erik Kjellberg has demonstrated that of the mid-seventeenth-century Italian publications which survive in Sweden, fourteen publications of sacred music and five publications of secular music once formed part of the Düben collection.<sup>20</sup> All five publications of secular music and five of the publications of sacred music date from before the arrival of the Italian ensemble in Sweden in 1652. Four of the five publications which date from before 1652 contain almost exclusively Roman music. Three are anthologies by the prolific Roman editor F. Silvestri (*RISM* 1647<sup>2</sup>, 1649<sup>3</sup> and 1649<sup>4</sup>), and the fourth is a collection of music by F. Foggia, his *Concentus ecclesiastici*, 2–5vv (Rome, 1645).

Queen Christina's love of foreign culture transformed the life of the Swedish Court. In particular, her decision to engage some of the finest young Roman musicians in 1652 was to have a profound effect on its musical life. Without doubt the years 1652–54 must have been a period of great musical activity at the Court. Gustav Düben's encounter with Italian music during these years had a lasting effect on him, and helps to explain the large proportion of Italian music that survives in the Düben collection. Whilst the complete repertory of Italian music performed during Christina's reign will never be known, a fuller picture is now perhaps possible. The visit of the Italian ensemble ended in 1654 when Christina converted to Roman Catholicism and abdicated. It is small wonder that she settled eventually in Rome, the source not only of her spiritual inspiration but also of the music which had played such a significant role during the last years of her reign.

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20. E. Kjellberg, 'Kungliga musiker i Sverige under stormaktstiden: Studier kring deras organisation, verksamheter och status, ca 1620 – ca 1720' (Diss., University of Uppsala, 1979), p.362.

