

Foreword

GIUSEPPE BALDASSARE SAMMARTINI (c.1695-1750) was born in Milan at the very dawn of the High Baroque, just in time to participate in the great flowering of the Italian style which seduced London with its primal sensuality in the early 1700s and predominated in much of Europe for most of the next half-century. He was the son of French oboist Alexis St-Martin and the elder sibling of Giovanni Battista. He and his brother learned the oboe under their father's tutelage at an early age, and both were known by several variations on the family name, St. Martini and San Martini being among the most-often used.

Sammartini spent most of his career in London, first arriving there about 1729. He had by this time developed into an oboist of great skill and, as was expected at the time, he was also accomplished on several other instruments, including the recorder. In London, Sammartini was engaged by Handel for the opera orchestra at the King's Theatre, in which he played with such other Italian luminaries as Geminiani and Barsanti. His skills as a performer and his early compositions gained him notice among the aristocracy, and from 1736 until 1750, Sammartini served Frederick, Prince of Wales, as Master of chamber music.

It was during this period that he composed most of his surviving works. Sir John Hawkins praises his compositional skill and ingenuity highly:

The merits of Martini as a composer of music in many parts, were unquestionably very great. He had a fertile invention, and gave into a style of modulation less restrained by rule than that of his predecessors, and by consequence affording greater scope for his fancy. [H]is singularities can therefore only be ascribed to that boldness and self-possession which are ever the concomitants of genius; and in most of the licences he has taken, it may be observed that he is in a great measure warranted by the precepts, and indeed by the example, of Geminiani.¹

THE F-MAJOR CONCERTO for soprano recorder is now Sammartini's best-known work, and it is considered by many, including Swedish recorder professor and virtuoso Dan Laurin, to be one of the finest ever written for the instrument.² Unfortunately, the concerto's date of composition is curiously difficult to establish, considering how well-known the piece has become. There are no contemporary published editions listed in BUCEM which appear to include it,³ and the only known surviving manuscript copy of this concerto is held in the *Musik- och teaterbiblioteket* in Stockholm, Sweden.

The manuscript itself gives few clues. (RISM's date for it is 1759—nine years after Sammartini died—but the listing contains no corroborative data.) The first page is headed '*Concerto a più Istromenti & la Fluta. Di Giusep^o St Martini*' but there is no signature, and the manuscript was obviously written by two different hands (the change at measure 115 in the third movement is quite marked). The copyists are not identified, however Professor Laurin, based upon his familiarity with the original document and his discussions with Swedish musicologist Eva Helenius-Öberg, has recently advanced an interesting theory that Johan Helmich Roman, a Swedish composer who lived from 1694 to 1758 may have obtained the manuscript in London during an

extended stay there while he was traveling to Naples and back between 1735 and 1737. The editor's comparison of Roman's own autograph manuscripts with the Sammartini reveals a marked similarity of hand for several key elements (in particular the G-clefs) in the final section of movement III, so it is quite possible that Roman was the second copyist. The identity of the scribe for the first part of the manuscript remains a mystery.

There are stylistic features in the concerto itself which indicate it was composed early in the transition to the pre-Classical, notably the fast/slow/fast movement structure and the introductory statement of the theme by the strings in mm.1-8 of the second movement.⁴ There is also the deliberate suspension of the theme at m.36, M.II, clearly for a solo cadenza.⁵ None of these elements is definitive, of course, but together they do tend to place the concerto shortly before Roman's stay in London, which concords with Prof. Laurin's theory on how the manuscript got to Sweden.

The final clue which could help in dating the concerto is that the solo part was written in transposed notation, requiring the performer to use alto fingerings on a soprano recorder. This practise does not appear to have been used on the continent but can be seen in a number of English works. The recorder concertos by William Babell, John Baston, Charles-François Dieupart, and Robert Woodcock, all of which were written in England during the first three decades of the 18th century, are cited as examples by Dr. David Lasocki, who has made an extensive and detailed study of recorder notation in the period.^{6,7} He also mentions that the latest documented instance of transposed notation prior to the Sammartini concerto appears to be in 1729.

A conservative conclusion based on all of these data would therefore place the concerto between 1729 and 1737, making it the last documented work to be notated in that manner.

IN THIS ARRANGEMENT for a mixed consort of recorders, traverso, and cello, the original string parts have been used as the basis for the accompaniment. The violin I part has been transcribed as faithfully as possible for the traverso, with only the necessary adjustments to accommodate the range of that instrument. The second violin part has been adapted to the range of the alto recorder, and the viola part has been given to the tenor recorder, but has been fleshed out by the editor to take advantage of this under-utilised middle voice. A new bass recorder part has been written to reinforce the lower voices, and the cello part has been transcribed faithfully. (The *pizzicato* in mm.39-49, Mvt. III, is editorial.)

A cadenza is required at bar 36 in Mvt. II, and the editor has written a brief one for soloists who do not wish to write or improvise a cadenza themselves.

Editorial Method

Ornamentation and articulation are notoriously inconsistent in manuscripts of this period, and most marks have been removed for this arrangement. Trills, dynamics,

«Concerto a piu Istromenti & la Fluta»

F Major / Fa majeur / F-Dur

For Soprano Recorder / pour flûte à bec soprano / für Sopranblockflöte

I. Allegro

Soprano Solo

Traverso

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Violoncello

15

S

Tr

A

T

B

VC

Sammartini / Concerto in F for Soprano Recorder

26 ^s (A)

S

Tr

A

T

B

VC

[Sop I]

37

S

Tr

A

T

B

VC

48 *Fine* (B)

S

Tr

A

T

B

VC

Sammartini / Concerto in F for Soprano Recorder

II. [Largo]

Soprano Solo

Traverso

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Violoncello

4

S

Tr

A

T

B

VC

7

[Trv/sop. II]

S

Tr

A

T

B

VC

(A)

Sammartini / Concerto in F for Soprano Recorder

11

S

Tr

A

T

B

VC

15

S

Tr

A

T

B

VC

19

S

Tr

A

T [Sop. I]

B

VC

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for a Soprano Recorder Concerto in F by Giovanni Sammartini. The score is arranged in a system with six staves. The top staff is for the Soprano Recorder (S), the second for the Recorder (Tr), the third for the Alto (A), the fourth for the Tenor (T), the fifth for the Bass (B), and the sixth for the Basso Continuo (VC). The music is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score is divided into three systems, with measures 11, 15, and 19 marked at the beginning of each. The Soprano Recorder part has a soprano clef and a 's' marking above the first measure of each system. The Recorder part has a soprano clef. The Alto part has a soprano clef. The Tenor part has a soprano clef. The Bass part has a bass clef. The Basso Continuo part has a bass clef. The Tenor and Bass parts are mostly silent, indicated by a horizontal line with a bar. The Alto part has some notes. The Recorder part has a complex melodic line with many sixteenth notes. The Basso Continuo part has a steady bass line.

Sammartini / Concerto in F for Soprano Recorder

III. *Allegro Assai*

The musical score is written for Soprano Recorder, Traverso, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Violoncello. It is in 6/8 time and F major. The score is divided into three systems, with measures 7, 13, and 19 marked at the beginning of each system. The Soprano Solo part features a melodic line with various ornaments and dynamics. The Traverso part provides a harmonic accompaniment. The Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Violoncello parts provide a rhythmic and harmonic foundation.

Sammartini / Concerto in F for Soprano Recorder

19 ^s (A)

S

Tr

A

T

B ^s

VC

25 ^s

S

Tr

A

T

B ^s

VC

30 ^s

S

Tr

A

T

B ^s

VC