

AND OTHER VENETIAN GEMS

Simone Stella harpsichord

Giovanni Picchi 1572-1643 Complete Harpsichord Music and other Venetian gems

From Fitzwilliam Virginal Book		Annibale Padovano 1527-1575	
(Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum)		16. Toccata del VI tono	4'05
1. Toccata	4'40	17. Ricercare del XII tono	4'58
Intavolatura di Balli d'Arpicordo		Claudio Merulo 1533-1604	
(Venice, 1621)		18. Canzon à 4, dita "La Bovia"	
2. Pass'e Mezzo	5'43	(from Canzone d'Intavolatura,	
3. Saltarello del Pass'e Mezzo	1'15	1592)	3'20
4. Ballo ditto il Pichi	2'03	19. Toccata I "Undecimo detto	
5. Ballo ditto il Stefanin	2'16	Quinto Tono" (from Toccate	
6. Ballo alla Polacha	2'17	d'Intavolatura, Libro II, 1604)	5'57
7. Ballo Ongaro	2'35		
8. Todescha	1'36	Andrea Gabrieli c.1533-1585	
9. Padoana ditta la Ongara	1'21	20. Canzon Francese detta "Frais	
10. L'Ongara a un'altro modo	1'37	et Gaillard" (from Canzoni alla francese et Ricercari Ariosi,	
From Intavolatura d'organo		Libro V, 1605)	4'06
(Torino, Biblioteca Nazionale,		,	
Coll. Foà VII)		Vincenzo Bellavere c.1540-1587	
11. Passe e Mezzo di Mg. Gio.		21. Toccata	3'28
Picchi	3'39		
12. Passo e Mezzo di Giovan.		Giovanni Gabrieli 1557-1612	
Picchi	2'52	22. Fuga del IX tono	2'35
13. Saltarello del detto	1'27	23. Ricercare del VII e VIII tono	2'57
14. Passe e Mezzo del Giovanni		24. Canzon I detta "La Spiritata"	
Picchi	4'50	Ch. 186 (from Canzoni per sonare,	
15. Saltarello del detto prima parte	1'21	1608 – tablature by Girolamo	· ·
1 1		Diruta)	2'43

Simone Stella harpsichord Harpsichord after Carlo Grimaldi by Roberto Marioni (Pietrasanta, 2016)

THE VENETIAN SCHOOL

At the dawn of the 16th century, one of the most important events for the diffusion of music took place in Venice: the birth of music publishing. In 1501 in Venice, the *Harmonice Musices Odhecaton*, an entire volume of printed music, was published for the first time by Ottaviano Petrucci using movable type (a Roman printer, Andrea Antico, used a woodcut type procedure a few years later to obtain the same result). In the history of music this was the first important step in a musical journey that led to the advent of a series of composers operating in Venice from 1550 to 1610, later known as the "*Venetian School*". The Venetian polychoral music of the 16th century were the most important musical phenomenon in Europe and greatly influenced the European music of that period. The innovation introduced by the Venetian School, together with the contemporary development of monody and opera in Florence coincide with the end of Renaissance music and the beginning of Baroque music.

The birth of this school was determined by several factors. The first was political: after the death of Pope Leo X in 1521 and the "sack of Rome" in 1527, the long tradition of Rome as a musical centre faded, and many musicians who wanted to move to Italy no longer went to Rome but chose to go to Venice. Another factor, perhaps the most important, was the existence of the splendid Basilica of San Marco with its unique interior with two chambers for the choir. In consideration of the spaciousness of this church it became necessary to develop a musical style that would take advantage of the delay of the sound caused by the large size of the church. In this way the Venetian polychoral style developed into the antiphonal style in which groups of singers, accompanied by musical instruments, sang in some moments in opposition ("double choir") and in others in unison united by the sound of the organ. The first composer to make this famous effect was Adrian Willaert, who became choirmaster at San Marco in 1527 and remained there continuously until his death in 1562. Willaert's influence was profound not only for his mastery as a composer but also for his exceptional skills as a teacher, so much so that many Venetians studied with him.

Another factor that promoted the creativity of this group of musicians was the development of publishing in Venice. In the early sixteenth century, Venice was a prosperous city with a stable government and soon became an important centre for the publication of musical scores. Composers from all over Europe flock to benefit from this innovation that had been invented a few years ago. Composers

from northern Europe, especially Flemish and French, considered among the best in Europe, came in large numbers to Venice. The internationality of the Venetian music lasted until the end of the 17th century.

From 1560 to 1570 two musical currents developed there: one progressive headed by Baldassare Donato and another conservative headed by Gioseffo Zarlino (who later became choirmaster in San Marco). The friction between the two groups led, in 1569, to a public duel between Donato and Zarlino during the celebration of the feast of San Marco. The members of the conservative current tended to follow the polyphonic style of the Franco-Flemish school and included Cipriano de Rore, Zarlino and Claudio Merulo; members of the progressive current included Donato, Giovanni Croce, and later Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli. A further point of friction between the two groups was whether to give the post of choirmaster to a Venetian and in any case to an Italian and not to a foreigner. The group that favored local talents prevailed and thus ended the domination of foreign musicians in Venice. In 1603 Giovanni Croce was appointed followed by Giulio Cesare Martinengo in 1609 and by Claudio Monteverdi in 1613.

The maximum development of the Venetian school was reached in the decade 1580-1590 when Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli composed great masterpieces for multiple choirs, brass groups, strings and organ. These works are the first to include dynamism in music and the first to include specific instructions on orchestration as well. Also the category of the organists and harpsichordists participate in this music with composers like Claudio Merulo and Girolamo Diruta: they begin to define a brilliant style and a technical virtuosity that, when transferred to northern Europe, will give life in subsequent generations to the works of great masters such as Dieterich Buxtehude or Johann Adam Reincken, and finally Johann Sebastian Bach.

Giovanni Matteo Picchi, "El soto dei Frari" (the lame of the Frari: this was his nickname in a 1610 denunciation that sees him teaching music to the nuns of the Holy Spirit without license) was born in Venice in November 1572 by Girolamo Picchi di Giovanni and Paulina di Iseppo di Giovan Battista from Vicenza, "Sonador". He lived and worked mainly in the parish of San Tomà, a large district of San Polo, strategic for its presence of two important institutions: the "Ca 'Granda" (or Casa Grande), that is the Minorite Basilica of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari (the largest church in the city), and the Scuola Grande di S. Rocco, the most influential of the six

devotional brotherhoods enabled to bear the epithet of "Great".

Organist, harpsichordist and composer, specialized in the practice of keyboard and pen instruments (manacordo, arpicordo and harpsichord), Picchi received at least part of his musical training within the family. It must have been his maternal grandfather, the harpsichordist Joseph di Battista Vicentino, who has lived in the house opposite that of Girolamo Picchi since the 1560s, to introduce his nephew to the harpsichord technique, orienting him towards a keyboard practice strictly connected to dance music, that in Venice enjoyed a notable tradition and diffusion; it is also plausible that another relative, the paternal uncle Battista Picchi, resident in S. Tomà and organist of the parish church of San Barnaba between 1581 and 1590, has provided for his formation an organ-ecclesiastical practice, which then constituted the other fundamental aspect of his musical career. There are also clues to believe that he received his musical training from a first-rate musician: Giovanni Croce, vice-master and then, from 1603, master of the chapel of San Marco.

Between 1594 and 1596, on an unprecised date, he was appointed organist of the Cappella dei Frari, a musical reality which, after the Marcian one, was perhaps the most important of the city: the post, until 1593-95, was held by Giovan Antonio Colombo, organist in S. Pantalon; Picchi kept it until his death.

On 1 December 1597, in the house of Giovanni Boraggia, silk maker of San Simeon Grando, at the presence of Giovanni Croce, "partner of the ring", and of the chaplain of the patriarch Matteo Zane, Picchi married Girolama Brunetti, daughter of Giovanni, pastry chef in the district of S. Angelo; from this union fourteen children were born. From the baptismal documents of 1599 and 1600 emerge, for example, close relations with some influential members of the Donà families of San Stin and San Trovaso: the godfather of his son Iseppo Domenico was Antonio Donà, son of Senator Nicolò and nephew of Doge Leonardo. He, for whom it is plausible to believe that the composer performed musical services of various genres, from teaching the harpsichord to performing instrumental ballet music, had a brilliant diplomatic career as ambassador to Savoy and later in England: the latter data offers a sensible explanation of the presence of a Toccata by Picchi in the so-called Fitzwilliam Virginal Book.

The fame of the composer as a dance music performer in Venice is confirmed by the appearance, in 1600, of an image of him in the title page of the "Nobiltà di dame" (second edition of Ballarino) by Fabrizio Caroso, the greatest dance treatise of the time.

In 1606 Picchi ran unsuccessfully for the post of organist in the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, a role that, with a difference of only two votes, was attributed to Giacomo Rondenin, a pupil of Gabrieli. If in these years Picchi did not succeed to integrate the role at the Frari with other appointments to churches and brotherhoods, his activity in private buildings must have been intense. This particular must have favored his skill in the keyboard performance of chamber music on dance casts which, between 1605 and 1613, led him to establish a formidable network of patrons of patrician rank, such as Andrea Pasqualigo di Carlo, Lazzaro Mocenigo di Nicolò, Stefano Bolani di Andrea (formerly patron of the lutenist from Bologna Ettore Tanara) and Girolamo Zen di Simon (patron of the second Venetian Academy), or of citizen class, such as the merchant of the Scuola

Grande of S. Rocco Giovanni Fiandra and the secretary of the Council of Ten Pietro Darduin. On 5 March 1623, after various disputes for lack of transparency in the competitions for the post of organist of S. Rocco, Picchi finally obtained the job, and on May 1st he also attempted to take the post of first organist of S. Marco, but it was given to Carlo Fillago. On 16 September 1624 he again participated, unsuccessfully, in the audition for the second organ of the Marcian Cathedral, of which Giovan Pietro Berti was the winner.

In 1625 Alessandro Vincenti published in Venice Picchi's *Canzoni da sonar con ogni sorte d'istromenti à 2, 3, 4, 6 et 8 voci col basso continuo* ("Canzoni to be played with every sort of instrument in 2, 3, 4 and 8 voices with continuo"): dedicated to Virginio Orsini, son of the homonymous duke of Bracciano, at the general era of infantry of the "Serenissima" (the notorious nickname of the Venice Republic), the edition is the last act of a musical activity that seems then lasted without other significant events.

He died in Venice on May 17 (someone claims the 19), 1643.

Most of Picchi's instrumental music has come down to us: his published works include a collection of dances for keyboard instruments, featured in the *Intavolatura di balli d'Arpicordo* (book I, the other three books of keyboard dances promised by Picchi in his preface of 1621 never seem to have appeared in print), 19 brilliant ensemble songs in *Canzoni da sonar con ogni sorte d'istromenti à 2, 3, 4, 6 et 8 voci col basso continuo*, a single motet present in the collection of Leonardo Simonetti "*Ghirlanda sacra*" (Venice, 1625), a Toccata for harpsichord included in the

Fitzwilliam Virginal Book (collection compiled by the Englishman Francis Tregian between 1600 and the year of his death, 1619) and three Passamezzi present in a manuscript, an *Intavolatura d'organo* (Organ tablature) conserved in the National Library of Torino (Foa Collection VII), compiled on commission around 1637/40, possibly in a court in Southern Germany. Each of the compositions contained in these sources is unique to its source.

The majority of Picchi's dances, an example of one of the finest writing available to the early 17th century harpsichordists, are composed in pairs. Three of the four Passamezzos are followed by a Saltarello in triple meter. The short dances in duple meter (*Ballo alla Polacha, Ballo Ongaro* and the *Todescha*) conclude with either a balletto or saltarello in triple meter. The *Padoana ditta la Ongara* and the *Ongara a un altro modo* obviously form a single composition consisting of variations. This appears from the fact that the first has no proper ending and that both are based on the same harmonic pattern.

There are several interesting stylistic details in these dances. The Toccata found in the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book (track 1) contains the best example of Picchi's daring harmonic style, superimposing the D major arpeggio in the right hand over the G chord in the left. The constant vacillation between the raised and lowered leading tones in the left-hand patterns found throughout the Pass'e Mezzo settings (track 2) are clearly indicated in the printed edition and unequivocally given in the organ tablature notation of the Torino manuscript; in this piece also the repeated use of the lowered second in the cadential trills gives an unusual tonal twist to the otherwise staid harmonic structure of the Pass'e mezzo. The opening of the "Dance in the Polish Style" (track 6) uses a rapid chordal shake rarely found in the keyboard literature of this time. In the Padoana ditta la Ongara (track 9) Picchi uses a rhythmically novel cadential pattern. Noteworthy is the passage in Passe e Mezzo del Giovanni Picchi (track 14), at measures 16-25, where strong dissonances are tolerated in order to preserve a characteristic motive. Examining the works of Picchi's contemporaries, we can't find other music with such an extended range of the keyboard used. Quoting the musicologist Edmond van der Straeten, Picchi's Intavolatura is "one of the most interesting monuments of early Italian harpsichord music".

Born in Padua in 1527, everything about Annibale Padovano's family is ignored, although Pietrucci says he was of humble conditions, so that Padovano, according to

the tradition of that time in use for artists, was designated with the only toponym. Dedicated to organ art, perhaps under the guidance of Sperindio Bertoldo (organist of the cathedral), on 30 November 1552 he succeeded frate Armonio, of whom he had been the alternate, as the first organist at the basilica of San Marco in Venice, according to the registers "elected to play the large organ with salary of forty ducats a year", having Girolamo Parabosco as a colleague to the second organ.

Falling ill in early 1553, Padovano was helped by the Procurators of the Cathedral who doubled his salary on May 12, in addition to the usual Christmas and Easter bonuses; but three years later (8 May 1556), the same Procurators decreed a punishment "awaiting the inobedience" on the occasion of the visit made to the church by Bona Sforza, Queen of Poland. On 2 July 1557 he was a judge in the competition for the appointment of Claudio Merulo to the second organ, and on 3 February 1563 he received, together with Merulo, another increase in salary. In these years, having now become a famous artist and active composer (he had published in Venice in 1556 for the types of Gardano the first book of four-part Ricercari, and in 1564 the first book of five-part Madrigals), Padovano was often absent from his post as organist, also neglecting the instrument. For this reason, on 2 November 1564, by decree of the Senate, it was forbidden to him to leave his office without express permission. He left Venice in 1564; on 1 July 1565 Padovano entered the court of Charles II of Austria in Graz as a court organist, with a monthly salary of 25 florins, and definitively left the post of organist in the Basilica of San Marco in 1566.

At the court of Graz he appeared as one of the most representative composers of the Venetian school and the appointments he had there, first as "obrister musicus" (1567) and then, around 1570, as choirmaster, testify to his merit. He died in Graz the 15 March 1575.

Moved by the great organ literature (J. Buus, A. Willaert, G. Cavazzoni) and a great contrapuntist himself, Annibale Padovano raised his keyboard music to a greater instrumental effect, especially enhancing the infinite possibilities of the organ, of which he had guessed, perhaps the first in such a remarkable way, the main architectural character. In the *Ricercari* (reprinted in 1588 in Venice by Gardano) and *Toccate e Ricercari per organo* (posthumous work, published in Venice by Gardano in 1604) his art appears clear and balanced. From the living writing of Padovano one can already see the tendency towards the organicity of the form and the expressive character of the piece, whose conquests will ascend with Andrea

Gabrieli and especially with Claudio Merulo, up to the highest efflorescence with Girolamo Frescobaldi.

Claudio Merulo was born in Correggio, by Giovanna Govi and Antonio Merlotti and was baptized on April 8, 1533, as appears from the baptismal registers of the Collegiate Church of San Quirino. Casa Merlotti was located in the Borgovecchio district, with access under the long portico, not far from the house of the painter Antonio Allegri, known as Correggio. The Merlotti coat of arms, which already existed on the family burial in the church of San Francesco, in Correggio, bore four mountains, one of which, superimposed on the other three, had a blackbird ("merlo") on the top. The same coat of arms can still be seen today in the composer's funerary monument in the Cathedral of Parma. Claudio, out of his youthful whimsy, liked to Latinize the name of the bird and be called Merulus, from which the name of Merulo derived in Italian, which he used throughout his life. Nothing is known about his musical education, even if the sources usually attribute the responsibility for the basic musical training to Girolamo Donati and to the madrigalist Tuttovale Menon (Tugdual Menon).

The name of Merulo appears for the first time in Brescia in 1556, when he was appointed organist of the Old Cathedral, but from recent discoveries it has been learned that already from the previous year Claudio frequented the Zantani house in Venice, a passage point for many artists and actors, from which we can deduce his contacts with the Venetian nobility prior to his appointment in Brescia.

Even before finishing the first year of work in Brescia, in July 1557, Merulo easily won the competition for the position of second organist in San Marco in Venice, one of the most prestigious organ jobs, replacing Girolamo Parabosco. Three years later the first printed Madrigal will be published in an anthology.

In 1565, together with some partners, he founded a musical typography, which would produce about forty titles over a five-year period, with a very strong activity especially in the first two and a half years. Merulo's first personal printed work will be self-printed (the *Madrigali a 5*). On October 1 he was appointed first organist in place of Annibale Padovano, who had suddenly left Venice: Andrea Gabrieli will be appointed to the second organ, and the two will form a close-knit and famous organ duo for eighteen years, which will attract onlookers and experts.

The role of Merulo within the Venetian cultural life is therefore of the first level, and it is no coincidence that his name appears among the ambassadors at the

marriage of Francesco Medici with the Venetian Bianca Cappello. His presence in Ferrara between 1576 and 1580 is almost certain, where he comes into contact with the Ariosto's madrigal and cultural environments. In 1583 his wife died after years of suffering, but he remarried after a few months.

In October 1584 he leaves the Venetian office, and in December his first payment appears to the court of Ottavio Farnese in the Duchy of Parma. He will remain there until the end of his life, taking up service under the court of Ranuccio I Farnese as a harpsichordist in the Cathedral from 1587, and in the church of Santa Maria della Steccata since 5 April 1591 he takes his place as organist: here he will solicit some substantial changes to the Antegnati Organ, for a more appropriate performance of his music. During the Parma period, Merulo travelled extensively between Venice, Padua and Rome, where he printed further music including the beautiful Toccate for keyboard. On April 25, 1604 Merulo was seriously ill, a preamble to his end on May 4, at the age of 71, due to a probable visceral infection.

Much of Claudio Merulo's fame is due to his keyboard music. Known since his time for the renewal of the form of the Toccata, in which he introduced counterpoint sections, he was esteemed for the gravitas of his compositions, for the noble posture at the instrument and the class and expressiveness of his music, which also made him the dedicatee and model of the famous treatise *Il Transilvano* by Girolamo Diruta.

Andrea Gabrieli was born in Venice in the Cannaregio district, probably in 1533. Francesco Caffi stated that he was a pupil of Adrian Willaert, master of the Marcian chapel, where the young Andrea became a cantor in 1536.

He was active in the cathedral of Verona around 1550 until 1564. In 1541 he participated, with negative results, in the competition for a post of organist in San Marco in Venice, before going to the cathedral of Verona as organist or cantor, while Vincenzo Ruffo was choirmaster here.

After 1550 he was organist at San Geremia in Venice, in 1557 he again participated in a competition in San Marco, where Claudio Merulo was preferred. He was absent from Venice for some time to move to Bohemia and Bavaria, where he became friend of the Archduke Charles II of Austria and of the Fugger family.

In 1564 he finally became the second organist in San Marco and in 1584 he moved to the first organ, while his nephew Giovanni (who later took care of the posthumous publication of some of his uncle's works) replaced the second one.

He left numerous compositions of sacred music (motets, psalms, masses, a Gloria for 16 voices and more) and profane (almost 250 madrigals). Among his instrumental compositions the organ Toccatas, Canzoni, and Ricercari and the ensemble music should be remembered.

He wrote seven books of madrigals, in perfect courtly style, in which however the tendency to precious colorism was manifested, where the contrapuntal thickness is lightened in delicate harmonic mixtures. Andrea's contribution to light forms was also important, along the lines of the Willaert of Villanesche Songs. These are short compositions generally for three voices, of a burlesque character, inclined to lively and brilliant isorhythm, often in dialect, such as the Giustiniane, the greghesche and the mascarate, compositions that were performed by masked singers, in the squares or in the patrician palaces.

The composer's contribution was also fundamental in the field of sacred music, especially with his works with five or six voices characterized by the masterful use of the polychoral technique. There are works with two, three and even four choirs, in which Gabrieli uses a sumptuous dialogic style, exploiting all the possibilities offered to him by the use of different sound sources, with echo effects, utterances or responses, timbral blocks that merge into one exciting fullness of color.

He died in Venice the 30 August 1585. Among his students there were his nephew Giovanni Gabrieli and Hans Leo Hassler.

The importance of Gabrieli's organ music (published posthumously from 1589 onwards) in the history of sixteenth-century instrumentalism is fundamental: in the Canzoni and Ricercari, mature organic essays of instrumental counterpoint and virtuosity, in the short, simple Intonations, and above all in the Toccatas, free from formal rigor and indeed open to a variety and an almost improvisational fluidity, an instrumental sense is conquered perfectly in tune with the new expressive needs.

Vincenzo Bellavere lived in the second half of the 16th century, Bellavere's date and place of birth are uncertain, and of his activity we do not know directly other than the conclusion, that is the appointment as organist in S. Marco in Venice by decree of the Procurators of the Republic of 30 December 1586. In this office he had the honor of succeeding Andrea Gabrieli of whom, as is clear from the documents themselves, he had been a disciple, together with the others two who participated in the competition held for the occasion, Paolo Giusto da Castello and Antonio Romatuni, over whom

Bellavere prevailed by majority of votes. From these data it can be argued that he studied and carried out activities in Venice and, perhaps, was born in the city or in the territory. After being assumed in San Marco unfortunately Bellavere didn't last long there, since he died after nine months, the 29 August 1587.

The remuneration that Bellavere had of 100 ducats a year, already seems to attest to the fame he had reached; after his death the post was to remain vacant for more than a year, then succeeded by Gioseffo Guami from Lucca. The fame of Vincenzo Bellavere really seems to find reason in his works. Only one volume of his published collections has survived, "di V. Belhaver il Secondo Libro de' Madrigali a 5 voci" (the second book of five-voice Madrigals of Vincenzo Bellavere) of 1575, and also a considerable quantity of profane and sacred compositions scattered in various florilegies of the time: over fifty madrigals from three to twelve voices appear in collections mostly published in Venice in the XVI and XVII century, some Mottetti and Magnificat in the Reliquiae sacrorum concentuum collections by G. Gabrieli and J. L. Hassler, Music for ecclesiastical concerts, Magnificat octo tonorum diversorum excellentissimorum authorum, etc., and some Toccatas for organ and harpsichord in 11 Transilvano by Girolamo Diruta.

His Toccata reveals an expert hand in the current style of the treated form, based on rapid ornamentation with alternate contrapuntal passages in the centre of the composition.

Giovanni Gabrieli was born in Venice in the early months of 1557. His father was the wool maker Piero Fais, a native of Carnia, while his mother was the sister of the composer Andrea Gabrieli, whose surname Giovanni assumed was very well known in the musical environment. In the 1570s he was sent to Munich, where he had an apprenticeship with Orlando di Lasso (who had also been the teacher of his uncle Andrea) and where he had contact, among others, with Gioseffo Guami. His madrigal "Quand'io ero giovinetto" appears in the collection "Il secondo Libro de' Madrigali a 5 voci de floridi virtuosi" (the second book of five-part Madrigals of the great virtuosos) of 1575, containing all compositions by the musicians who were in the service of Albert V of Bavaria. Gabrieli stayed for a few years in Munich and the court records show that in 1578 he received livery and salary.

In 1584 he was in Venice to temporarily replace Claudio Merulo as player of the first organ in the Basilica of San Marco, while on January 1 of the following year he

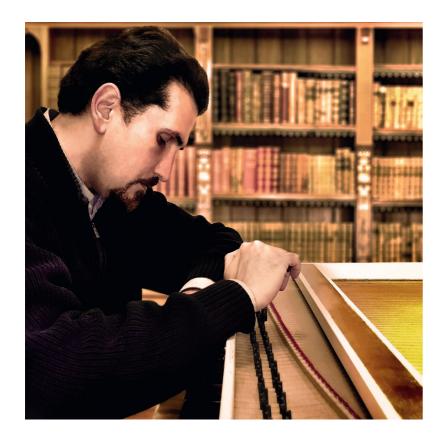
won a competition that made his job permanent (he kept this prestigious post until his death in 1612). Shortly after, comes the appointment of Vincenzo Bellavere's successor as organist at the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, where he remained until the end of his activity.

After Andrea's death in 1585, Giovanni edited a large number of his uncle's compositions, and in all the collections he added several of his own works.

The duties in the Palatine Basilica, the frequent services at San Rocco and the numerous collaborations with other churches in the city had to make Gabrieli's activity frenetic and probably required that he be replaced on many occasions in San Marco, however they determine a wide and diversified compositional production, which sees a first publication in the Sacrae Symphoniae collection of 1597. The work was immediately republished the following year by Kauffmann in Nuremberg. In fact, Gabrieli enjoyed great fame in German-speaking countries, and this is also confirmed by the number of musicians sent by their respective patrons to Venice to study with him: Alessandro Tadei from Graz, remained with Gabrieli from 1604 for two and a half years and on his return he took the place of organist of Archduke Ferdinand; Christian IV of Denmark sent at his own expense in 1599 Morgens Pedersøn, Hans Nielsen, the organist Melchior Borchgrevinck, two adult singers and two boys, in 1602-4 another group that still included Nielsen and Hans Brachrogge, and from 1605 to 1609 Pedersøn again: Johann Grabbe was sent from Westphalia between 1607 and 1610; the court of Saxony sent Heinrich Schütz, who remained in Venice from 1609 until shortly after Gabrieli's death. A Venetian obituary records Gabrieli's death at the age of 55, on 12 August 1612.

Since Winterfeld, the first great scholar of Gabrieli's music, many publications have highlighted the contribution made by the musician to the evolution of instrumental language, conceived according to an unprecedented expressive sensitivity, free from the more conventional schemes of the sixteenth-century tradition and already open to the future conquests of Baroque art. Although most of his production remains entrusted to the manuscript tradition, the examination of the few printed compositions that have come down to us has allowed to highlight the evolutionary character of his writing, widely perceptible both in the pieces of sacred music and in the instrumental works.

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Raised in Florence (Italy), today Simone Stella is considered one of the most respected performers of ancient music on the harpsichord and organ thanks to his impressive discography. After studying piano with Marco Vavolo and Rosanita Racugno, organ with Mariella Mochi and Alessandro Albenga in Florence and harpsichord with Francesco Cera in Rome, and attending masterclasses held by Ton Koopman, Matteo Imbruno and Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini, in 2008 Gustav Leonhardt awarded him the First Prize in the 1st International Organ Competition "Agati-Tronci" in Pistoia. Stella started a brilliant soloist career that brought him performing in many important festivals throughout Europe, USA and Brazil, where he has also held seminars and masterclasses on the baroque repertoire for organ and harpsichord.

His monumental soloist discographic production, rewarded by the international review (Musica, Diapason, Fanfare, Klassik, BBC Music Magazine among others), includes the complete organ and harpsichord works of Dieterich Buxtehude, Georg Böhm, Johann Adam Reincken, Johann Gottfried Walther, Johann Jakob Froberger, Johann Pachelbel, Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow and Federico Maria Sardelli recorded for Brilliant Classics, and works of Bach, Handel, Rameau and Cherubini for the labels OnClassical and Amadeus Rainbow. He collaborates with the baroque orchestra Modo Antiquo and the symphonic orchestra La Filharmonie.

Active as a composer, Simone Stella has published works for the Italian publisher Armelin of Padua. Since 2011 Simone Stella is the titular organist of the historical organs in the Basilica of Santissima Annunziata in Florence.