

Angiol Michele Bartolotti – Prince of the Muses Monica Hall



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1. Introduction

Bartolotti's **Libro primo di chitarra spagnola** has no imprint but the dedication to the Florentine nobleman Duca [Jacopo] Salviati, Duke of Giuliano [1607-1672] is signed Florence, 9th August 1640. His **Libro secondo di chitarra** is dedicated on the title page to Queen Christina of Sweden. There is no letter of dedication and the book is undated but it was printed in Rome with official permission. Queen Christina arrived in Rome in December 1655, having abdicated in June of the previous year. The book was

presumably printed after that date. The two books are published together in facsimile by Minkoff.

Like Foscarini, Bartolotti was a lutenist and theorbo player as well as a guitarist. Although he is usually referred to today as Angelo Michele he actually signs himself in the earlier book “Angiol: Michele”. As he describes himself as “Bolognese” on the title page of his first guitar book and “di Bologna” on the title page of his second, it is to be assumed that Bologna was the city of his birth. Because Italy was made up of numerous independent states, Italian composers tended to identify themselves in this way. There is however no evidence that he worked there or belonged to any “Bolognese School” of guitarists as has been suggested. Since his first book is signed from Florence and dedicated to a member of the Florentine aristocracy, he is more likely to have spent his early career in that city. It is clear from the introduction that he hoped to acquire Duc Salviati’s patronage there as he writes in his letter

I venture to present to Your Excellency the fruits of my genius although imperfect, in order to draw your attention to my burning desire to acquire your patronage, and to show the world how much I value your Virtue and Largesse. Your Excellency will find in this document various pieces for the Spanish guitar. These are dedicated to you with good reason, because it [the guitar] is a thing held dear by the Muses and even though it is not one of the most sublime of instruments, I have tried hard to render it harmonious. I trust therefore that in the same way that, as is well known, the Prince of the Muses did not think it inappropriate to woo the Forests with the sound of a humble bagpipe, your kindness will not disdain this product of my diligent study. May you receive my homage with pleasure, whilst I pray the Heavens to bestow on you endless happiness.

The British Library’s copy of **Libro primo** has a hand written note on the fly leaf -

Dil Giulio Medici

and on the title page there is the stamp of a previous library which owned it which reads

**MEDPALAT
BIBL.CAES**

with the Medici coat of arms surmounted by a crown. This suggests that it previously belonged to a member of the Medici family and was housed in the Library of the Medici Palazzo in Florence. It is still in its original white leather binding with gold decorations. The British Library acquired it in 1880.

It seems that Giulio Medici also owned the lute manuscript **I:Fn ms. Magl.XIX** which is dated 1635. This does not however include a piece for guitar on f.13v as stated by James Tyler in “The guitar and it’s music” (p.69). Another manuscript in the Dolmetsch Library, Haslemere, **Ms.II.C.23** known as the “Medici Lute Manuscript”, because it has the Medici coat of arms stamped on the first folio, does however include on f.72r-v the

first of Bartolotti's *passacaglie* and the opening bars of the second from his **Libro primo**, copied in a different hand from the rest of the manuscript, probably after 1640.

Subsequently Bartolotti was amongst a group of Italian musicians and actors invited to the court of Queen Christina of Sweden. There are records of his employment there as a theorboist between 30th November 1652 and 12th July 1654. Christina also loved French ballet and employed French musicians, including the singer Anne de la Barre, as well as English and German ones so that Bartolotti was working in a cosmopolitan environment. After her abdication Christina made her way to Rome via Brussels and Innsbruck where she was received into the Roman Catholic church on 3rd November, 1655. Bartolotti seems to have followed in her wake as he was apparently employed by the governor of the Tyrol, Archduke Ferdinand Karl between 1655-1656.

Having given up one throne, Christina quickly aspired to another – that of Naples which was under Spanish rule at the time. To further her cause she left Rome in the summer of 1656 and travelled to Paris to enlist the support of Mazarin, arriving there on 8th September. She remained in France – an unwanted guest – until May, 1658 when she was persuaded to return to Rome. If Bartolotti was part of her entourage, he may have decided his best option was to remain in France. In any event he seems to have spent the later part of his life in the French capital. He probably took part in the first performance of Cavalli's opera "Ercole amante" on 7th February 1662 as he is listed in the royal accounts for the first quarter of the year 1664 together with the other Italian musicians of the *Cabinet de Sa Majesté* including the singer, Anna Bergerotti, who were involved. In that year he also took part in the fifth *Entrée* to Molière's "Le Mariage forcé" accompanying Bergerotti and other singers in a "Concert espagnol". When the Italian troupe was dismissed in 1666, Bartolotti apparently entered the service of the Prince de Condé.

Bartolotti was highly esteemed as a theorbo player. In a letter dated May 1670, the Dutch scholar, Constantyn Huygens, mentions having heard "Angelo Michel" play the theorbo in Paris at the house of Anna Bergerotti and regrets not having asked him for copies of the music. Huygens was in Paris between 1661 and 1665. Two manuscripts which date from the 1660s include music for theorbo attributed to Bartolotti - **A : ETGoess Ms. XV 912-2277**(1665) includes 6 pieces and **A: Wn Mus. Ms. 17706** (c.1660), 10 pieces. During the 1660s he also wrote a book of instructions for continuo playing which, after circulating first in manuscript, was eventually published in 1669 with the title **Table pour apprendre à toucher le théorbe sur la basse continuo**. Although the title refers to the theorbo, the exercises are intended for the theorboed lute popular amongst amateurs in France which did not have re-entrant first and second courses.

In the record books of the *Secrétariat de la Maison du Roi* (Louis XIV) there is an entry in January, 1682 recording that the possessions of a certain Italian "Miquelange" were assigned to one "Launay, Garde de la Compagnie de Luxemburg, y servant depuis neuf ans". If this was Bartolotti, it is to be assumed that he had died some time previously. Under French law the possessions of aliens who died in France became the property of the King to dispose of as he saw fit. There are no references to Bartolotti after that date.

In the *A Lettori* to his fourth guitar book, **Soavi concerti di sonate musicali** (1659) Granata includes Bartolotti's name in the list of composers whose music he accuses Corbetta of having plagiarized and there are certainly passages in Bartolotti's works which crop up in Corbetta's although this may not be intentional. It is interesting that although Sanz mentions Foscarini, Kapsberger, Pellegrini, Granata and Corbetta in the **Prologo** to his **Instruccion de music** (1674), he doesn't mention Bartolotti although this may be because Bartolotti hasn't included any detailed instructions in either of his books.

Although as far as we know Bartolotti did not publish any more guitar music, the music from his **Libro secondo** may have circulated quite widely in manuscript. The manuscript, **Pieces de guittarre de differends autheurs recueillis par Henry François de Gallot** (GB:Ob Ms.Mus.Sch.C94) which dates from the 1660s includes at least 13 pieces from this source, in some instances identifying the composer by his initials – **a.m.** In addition there are four preludes attributed to **a.m.** which may be by him.

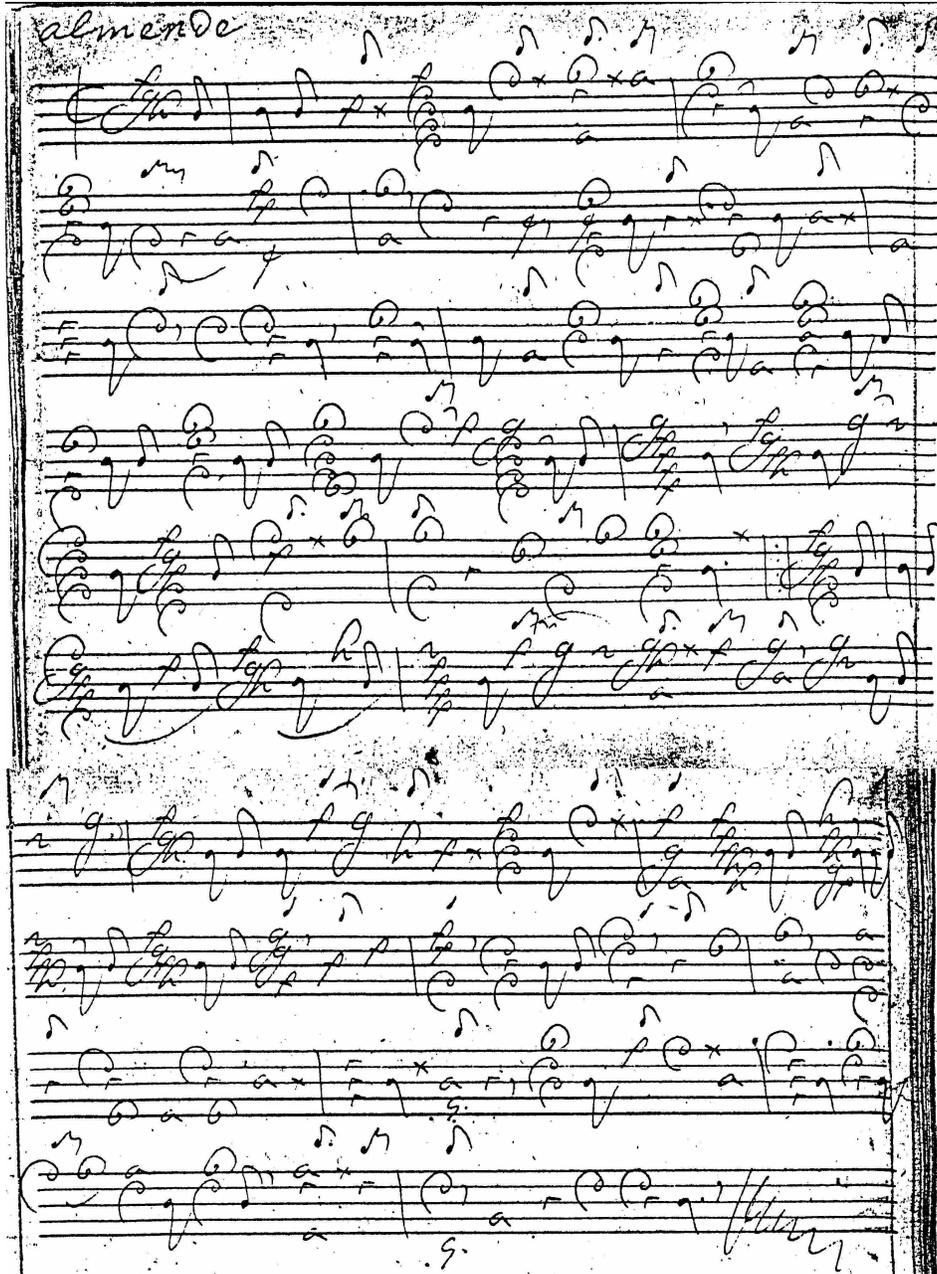
Pieces by Bartolotti in GB:Ob Ms.Mus.Sch.C94

| | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|---------|------|--------------------------------|
| f.6 | Prelude (1) | G major | a.m. | |
| f.7v | Allemande | G major | | Book 2, p.18 |
| f.7v | Gigue | G major | a.m. | Book 2, p.15 |
| f.8 | Courante | G major | | Book 2, p.23 |
| f.8v | Ballet Chabottico | G major | | Book 2, p.13 |
| f.12 | Prelude | C major | a.m. | |
| f.13 | Allemande | C major | a.m. | Book 2, p.30.Abridged |
| f.13v | Gigue | C major | | Book 2, p.28 |
| f.21 | Prelude | D major | a.m. | |
| f.25 | Prelude | A minor | a.m. | Book 2, p.54? Opening similar |
| f.26 | Allemande | A minor | | Book 2, p.55 |
| f.27 | Pasacail | A minor | a.m. | Book 2, p.62. Abridged |
| f.30 | Prelude | D minor | a.m. | |
| f.30v | Allemande | D minor | | Book 2, p.70 |
| f.75 | Prelude (1) | G minor | | Book 2, p.57. Varies |
| f.80v | Sarabande | G minor | | Book 2, p.90. Varies |
| f.80v | Passacaglie | G minor | | Book 2, p.100 (first 10 vars.) |

Even more interesting, a manuscript of English provenance copied probably in the last decade of the 17th century includes the *Allemanda* in D minor found on p.70 of **Libro secondo** with a different Double. Clearly Bartolotti's music continued to be popular for

many years after his death although there are some rather startling errors which suggests that the copyist was somewhat inexperienced.

Allemande in D minor (Libro secondo, p.70) copied into a late 17th century manuscript of English provenance now privately owned



A Case of Mistaken Identity?

The French manuscript, **F: Pn Vm. 7675** includes an Allemande (f.79) and a Sarabande (f. 72) attributed to **Angelo Mikielo** suggesting that Bartolotti might be the composer. The same pieces are also included in **F: Pn Rés. 844** where the Allemande (p. 268) is titled “Allemande du Juif” and the Sarabande (p. 286) “Sarabande d’Angelot”. Because several other pieces in these and other French manuscripts are described as “*du Juif*” the possibility that these might be by Bartolotti has been examined but has been shown to be very unlikely.

The young English lutenist and guitarist, Bullen Reymes, who toured the continent in the 1630s, arrived in Turin on 6th October, 1633 where he remained until the end of the month. On the 8th he went to visit a Jew called **Sig. Angilo** who played the lute, and he heard him play again two days later. There is however no evidence to suggest that this was Bartolotti. At least one of the pieces described as “du Juif” – the sarabande in **F:Pn Vm7675** (p.97) is attributed to Corbetta in another source and several of the other “du Juif” pieces are in a scordatura known as “ton du Juif”. Most of the pieces in question are rather simple – certainly not of the quality we associate with Bartolotti’s work. The name Angelo Mikielo or Michaelangelo is a common Italian Christian name so that it is uncertain whether any of the the pieces are actually by Bartolotti.

At the beginning of each of Bartolotti’s two books there are brief instructions to the player. These are translated with a commentary and musical examples in Sections 2 and 3. Section 4 examines Bartolotti’s use of *lettere tagliate*.