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The lute “Toccatà” in Italy in the first half of the Seventeenth century.

The word “Toccatà”, in the original Italian, suggests the physical act of the player taking up the instrument and starting to play, and the exact moment in which one breaks the silence and commences the musical gesture, as if it were still not wholly structured.

The first examples of toccatas for lute are to be found in the collection by Antonio Casteliono published in 1536¹, two are by Francesco da Milano and Pietro Paolo Borrono, other two are anonymous. These “pre-toccatas” stand out as short written improvisations, with the twofold objective of verifying the tuning of the instrument and of loosening the fingers in preparation of other tunes of higher contrapuntal relevance; otherwise, they suggest the form of a post-lute to dance movements (Tocata nel fin del ballo).

The term “Toccatà” was rarely used during the Renaissance for lute music. However, in the Baroque era, it features a progressive development with authors like J.H. Kapsberger and A. Piccinini. Indeed, starting from the first years of the Seventeenth century, we notice a larger interest in this musical form which goes on to represent a relevant part of the general production. This growing attention to the genre, in lieu of more rigorously contrapuntal forms such as *Fantasia* and *Ricercari*, is testified also by the number of toccatas for lute found in the manuscripts of the collections (see Raimondi and Doni’s, for instance).

The pre-Baroque toccata is compositionally relevant and linguistically well established, its roots lie in Venetian keyboard music of the end of the Renaissance period. From this, it inherits the presentation of a succession of contrasting elements, in which diminished passages alternate in the various textures of imitative sections. Likewise, the toccatas for lute (but also those for archlute and theorbo) maintain the same alternation of sections, delimited by cadences, structuring themselves as a musical discourse, intersected by punctuation marks that define its rhythm and breathing. Here, though, every section is characterized by different “affects”, emerging as (sometimes unusual) harmonic successions, virtuosic diminutions which explicit expressive elements, dance movements, fragments of contrapuntal webs. The development of this compositional form in the first part of the Seventeenth century thus happens through the assimilation of the new esthetic of the “*seconda pratica*”, tied to the different “affects” that the music wants to represent, however still maintaining syntactic elements of the late-Renaissance Venetian toccata.

This musical matter, therefore, presents itself, by its same nature, not compressed into a rigorous form, but in a constant relation with the performer, who leads a new and fundamental role. The interpreter, inasmuch as he is the creator of an “affective” experience, is left free to re-interpret the same structure of the composition, thus making possible also an operation of re-structuring of the general form proposed to him by the music, by taking away, connecting and adding musical material².

The toccatas from the “*Libro Primo d’Intavolatura de Lauto*”, exposed in this volume, show the full revolutionary tension of the first years of the Seventeenth century, and Kapsberger reveals himself, also in this, as a genial foreseer being the first author to systematically use the toccata form in a printed book for lute, in a succession of eight pieces, of large scope. These compositions, more than others, show the prevalence of Baroque expressive elements over the Renaissance heritage, formalizing them through the utilization of rhetorical artifices.

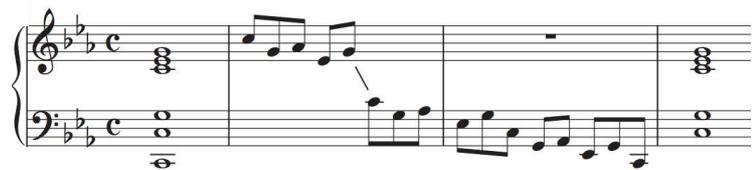
¹ G. A. Casteliono. *Intabolatura de leuto de diversi autori* [...]. Milano, 1536.

² G. Frescobaldi. *Il Primo libro di Toccate e Partite d’Intavolatura di Cimbalò*. Roma, 1615b-Introduzione.

From the point of view of structure, the toccatas are built on the alternation of different sections, see for example the Toccata nr.3, divided in four distinct parts. The first section functions as an introduction and exhibits chord successions (measures 1-10), the second section is introduced by a broken line and develops with an accompanied melody (meas. 11-21), the third section is distinguished by an imitative counterpoint with a descending chromatic theme (meas. 21-44), followed by the final section (meas. 45-48), in which we see free melodic elements and a final cadence.

In these 8 toccatas we can notice various elements which form the style of Kapsberger:

Arpeggio forms



Toccata 5 b.1-4

Chordal passages



Toccata 6 b.1-2

Imitative counterpoint



Toccata 3 b.21

Scales and passages
Single runs



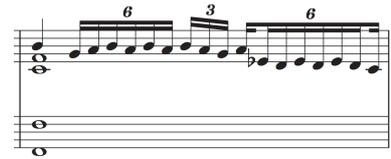
Toccata 1 b.81-82

Scales and passages
Runs of tenths



Toccata 7 b.34-35

Irregular rhythmic elements



Toccata 6 b.48

Written ornaments



Toccata 4 b.31

The following work is an effort to apply a method of transcription, the most complete possible, in what regards the study and execution of Kapsberger's Toccatas for Lute.

This edition has two distinct sections: the first, in which we see the tablature, the transcription with the original notes and harmony, and the part of the guitar, transposed, and the second one, in which the separate part for guitar with the fingerings is optimized for performance. The transcription over two staves allows for a deeper understanding of the movements of the voices, which is simplified in the guitar part, because of the specific idiom. The direct confrontation with the tablature allows to delve deeper into the operation of transcription and, eventually, to add personal modifications. The separate section with the fingerings is primarily presented to help performance and instrumental study.

We deliberately avoided any time indications, as well as other dynamic or diagogic signs, so that the performer can relate himself to the works in a very personal way, seeking thus, alone, through the relationship with the musical material, that subtle line between imagination, creativity, historical consciousness and critical understanding.

Stefano Maiorana

Notes to the guitar transcription.

The fingerings included in the separate part for guitar have been prepared, in order to deliver the musical discourse and contrapuntal texture of these eight toccatas to the fullest.

We chose some solutions of “not easy performance”, because our first priority was to leave the polyphony intact, as it develops in the integral transcription on the double staff.

In some cases, inside the chordal figurations, it was not possible to keep all the notes in the transcription at their actual heights. In these cases, one or more notes may have been omitted, and these are shown in gray on the staff for the guitar part.

Otherwise, there are cases in which the suggested fingerings cannot keep the length of the notes, as shown on the staff. This is due primarily to the technical and physical possibilities and limits of the guitar as an instrument, opposed to the lute; therefore, we have tried to find the solution that best allowed us to stay close to the original polyphonic development of the work.

Notes omitted in the transcription for guitar,
outlined in grey

Toccata 6 b.11

Duration ties omitted in the transcription for guitar
outlined in grey

Toccata 4 b.25

Notes that cannot maintain the original length

Toccata 6 b.22-23
detached guitar part

HK Toccata n°1

Original instrument: Ten Course Lute in G.

Original key: F min.

Transposition for guitar: D min.

Transcribed by
Stefano Maiorana

Guitar

Lute

5

6

6

*

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10

Musical score for measures 10-15. The score includes a treble clef with a 3/8 time signature, a piano accompaniment with grand staff, and a guitar fretboard diagram below. The guitar diagram shows fingerings for measures 10 through 15, including a barre at the 4th fret in measure 11 and a natural sign in measure 12.

16

Musical score for measures 16-20. The score includes a treble clef with a 3/8 time signature, a piano accompaniment with grand staff, and a guitar fretboard diagram below. The guitar diagram shows fingerings for measures 16 through 20, including a barre at the 4th fret in measure 17 and a natural sign in measure 18.

21

Musical score for measures 21-25. The score includes a treble clef with a 3/8 time signature, a piano accompaniment with grand staff, and a guitar fretboard diagram below. The guitar diagram shows fingerings for measures 21 through 25, including a barre at the 4th fret in measure 22 and a natural sign in measure 23.

27

6

6

0 1 0 1 0 3 0 2 3 0 2 3 0 2 4 5 5 3 3 1 1 0 0 3 0 2

3 1 0 1 0 3 0 2 3 0 2 3 0 2 3 1 1 0 0 3 0 2

33

3

3 3 0 1 3 0 1 5 3 1 0 3 1 0 3 1 0 3 2 3 0 3 0 1 3 3 1 3 3 2 0 3 1 0 1 3 3 1 3

37

3

0 3 1 0 0 3 1 0 0 3 1 0 1 3 2 0 1 3 1 3 3 2 1 0 0 1 3 0 1

1 0 3 1 0 3 2 5 3 1 0 3 2 0 3 1 0 3 2 1 3 0 1

81

84

*Notes about the original tablature and the guitar transcription:

***Notes about the original tablature and the guitar transcription:**

- 1) bars n° 9-29-56-86: the rhythmic value used in the tablature means the use of irregular ternary groups.
- 2) bar n° 48: positions of rhythmic values are not clear.
- 3) bar n° 51: positions of rhythmic values are not clear.
- 4) bar n° 55: positions of rhythmic values are not clear.
- 5) bars n° 18-87: gray notes are omitted in the detached guitar transcription.

Guitar

HK Toccata n°1

Original key: F min.

 Edited for guitar by
 Matteo de Rossi

⑥ in D

6

10

14

19

25

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