Introduction

Giacomo Gorzanis (*c.* 1530–after 1574) was a blind musician who travelled with his lute through the Austrian lands from Trieste to Ljubljana, Graz and further afield all the way to Imperial Vienna. He is documented between 1557 and 1575.[1]

Records of Gorzanis's playing are scarce, but his lute pieces have survived in four printed volumes and one manuscript book of tablatures. All the printed editions were published in Venice. The first three came out with his approval between 1561 and 1564, and a revision of the second book a year later. The fourth book, dated 1579, is a posthumous collection of his pieces transcribed from memory by his son Massimiliano. The manuscript volume is dated 1567.

In terms of content and the arrangement of the compositions, all the books are quite similar to one another. Numerically, and in terms of their overall nature, they are dominated by dances; in addition, they contain some intabulations of villanellas and a few more compositions employing imitative textures.

Introductory dedicatory letters in the printed books reveal Gorzanis's connections with noble connoisseurs and patrons of music in Carniola and Gorizia. They reveal the existence of cultural circles in which this kind of musical repertoire emerged and to whose members it was dedicated; moreover, these letters also bear witness to the music-making of those noblemen, rich merchants and educated persons, who were amateur musicians and connoisseurs.

Gorzanis dedicated his third book of lute tablature, entitled *Il terzo libro de intabolatura di liuto*, dated 1564, to Vito of Dornberg (1529–1591), who was the governor of the County of Gorizia and an influential adviser and envoy to the Austrian court; he later became a long-serving Imperial ambassador in Venice and subsequently Rome. This book was brought out by the Venetian printer Antonio Gardano.

Vito of Dornberg belonged to the ancient nobility of Gorizia, which, following the extinction of the Counts of Gorizia, served the new Habsburg provincial princes.[2] His father Erasmus died of a prolonged illness just one day after Vito's birth. His mother Beatrice, who came from the old Carniolan noble family of Loser, looked well after the education of their three sons despite the debts she had inherited.

Before departing for Rome in 1589, the elderly Vito penned an unfinished autobiography in Latin at his residence in Gorizia. In it, he recounts that financial hardship initially forced his mother to raise him at home. Prior to his enrolment at the University of Padua in 1545 she sent him to municipal schools in Trento and Verona.[3] However,

1. On the life of Gorzanis, see the introduction and cited bibliography in: Giacomo Gorzanis, *Il primo libro di napolitane che si cantano et sonano in leuto (1570), Il secondo libro delle napolitane a tre voci (1571)*, ed. Alenka Bagarič, Monumenta artis musicae Sloveniae 51 (Ljubljana, 2007), xxv–xxviii. See also Alenka Bagarič, "'Villanelle alla napolitana' Giacoma Gorzanisa in njegova vloga v *širitvi* vilanele iz Italije na Kranjsko in v sosednje avstrijske dežele" (PhD dissertation, University of Ljubljana, 2009), 26–61 and 205–218.

2. An outstanding contemporary source reports on the merits, services and titles of Erasmus of Dornberg, his wife Beatrice and their three sons. Francesco Sansovino, *Ritratto delle più nobili et famose città d'Italia* (Venice, 1575), 50r–51r. See also Johann Weichard Valvasor, *Die Ehre dess Hertzogtums Crain*, vol. 3 (Ljubljana, 1689), 74; Carlo Morelli, *Istoria della Conteia di Gorizia*, vol. 3 (Gorizia, 1855), 296–297; Maja Žvanut, "O poreklu in rodu Beatrice Dornberg", *Annales* 3 (1993): 339–342.

3. The life and work of Vito of Dornberg have been exhaustively described by the historian Silvano Cavazza on the basis of a manuscript autobiography entitled *Breve narratione delle attioni principali da me passate nel corso della vita mia* (housed in the Vatican Library, Ms. Barber. Lat. 4873), as well as Vito's extensive surviving correspondence. Silvano Cavazza, "'Cosi buono et savio cavalliere': Vito di Dornberg, patrizio goriziano del Cinquecento", *Annali di storia isontina* 3 (1990): 7–36. See also Silvano Cavazza, "Dornberg, Vito", in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani,* vol. 41 (Roma, 1992), 496–500; Helena Seražin, "Cesarski veleposlaniki iz vrst goriškega plemstva v vlogi posrednikov novih arhitekturnih modelov in umetnostnih smeri", *Kronika* 60 (2012): 645–666.

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in view of his greater inclination towards leisure and entertainment than towards his legal studies – a shortcoming compounded by his poor command of Latin – she eventually recalled him to Gorizia. In 1547 he entered the service of the Provincial Captain of Gorizia, Francesco della Torre, who appointed him as his deputy and the administrator of the County of Gorizia. Vito held this position for nearly fifteen years. He subsequently assumed the post of Imperial Ambassador to Venice, spending two decades undertaking diplomatic missions for Emperor Maximilian II and his brothers, Archduke Ferdinand II of Austria-Tyrol and Archduke Charles II of Inner Austria. During this period he also secured government positions for his own brothers.

Throughout their lives the three brothers faithfully served their sovereigns, who in turn rewarded them with numerous titles and honorary offices. As early as 1551 Emperor Ferdinand I had appointed Vito as his adviser; later, on 28 September 1563, he created him a Knight of the Golden Spur of the Holy Roman Empire at the royal residence in Bratislava (Ger. Pressburg). Archduke Charles II subsequently made him a Court Councillor and in 1567 named him Captain for life of Trieste, a city where Vito never permanently resided. In 1568, the Archduke appointed the three brothers Grand Hereditary Chamberlains of the County of Gorizia. Finally, in 1578, Emperor Rudolf II elevated the brothers and their descendants to the rank of Barons of Dornberg.

In his autobiography, written in the humanist tradition, Vito of Dornberg articulated his self-image alongside socially desirable behavioural patterns. Addressing his nephews, he announced his intention to preserve the memory of his accomplishments while urging them to shun idleness and pursue endeavours that would bring honour and material benefit both to themselves and to the family as a whole. He proudly observed that all his three brothers and all of his nephews spoke Italian, German and Slovenian, and that their knowledge of these languages enabled them to secure administrative and military posts in Prague, in Vienna and along the Croatian Military Frontier. Upon her death in 1565 their mother Beatrice Dornberg was honoured with elegant Latin and Italian verses penned not only by prominent Friulian poets but also by some of Italy's most celebrated literary figures, including Luca Contile, Bernardo Tasso and Torquato Tasso. These poems initially circulated in manuscript form before being published in the volume *Il sepolcro de la illustrissima signora Beatrice Dorinbergo* (Brescia, 1568).

The immediate impetus for Gorzanis's dedication may have been Vito's ascent within the noble hierarchy, a development the composer noted in his preface. However, it more likely reflects the patronal practices that this well-informed and prudent nobleman cultivated in his daily life. Together with his wife Rachel, a member of the noble Malvasia family of Bologna whom he had married in 1551 at a young age, they were renowned as a refined and virtuous couple, in keeping with contemporary norms befitting their rank and status. While serving as a Habsburg diplomat in Venice, Vito undoubtedly established a personal friendship with the Venetian scholar and man of letters Francesco Sansovino (1521–1586). In his book on the noblest Italian cities Sansovino described contemporary Gorizia as a well-defended, beautiful and populous city ideal for refined households. He lauded its citizens as intelligent, noble in character and fit for leadership, singling out the Dornberg family for their literary accomplishments and devotion to the Imperial court.

In his dedication Gorzanis praised Vito's expertise in "noble disciplines and arts". This cultivated reputation is further evidenced by dedications in two Venetian prints dating from Vito's diplomatic service in the city, edited for publication by two musicians prominent in the *cappella ducale* at S. Marco: the singer Giulio Bonagionta (in 1568) and the *Primo maestro* Ludovico Balbi (in 1570). While Bonagionta's dedication lauds his patron's innate nobility, virtue and political influence, the dedication in Gorzanis's posthumous book of lute tablatures from 1579 shifts the focus to the cultural interests of Vito's wife. In it, Massimiliano Gorzanis addresses the Baroness of Dornberg as his esteemed patroness, describing her as a devotee and protector of "virtuosos" who generously welcomes "kind souls and great minds". Concluding with a conventional tribute, Massimiliano's dedicatory letter also sheds light on her private musical pursuits.

While no record of contact between Giacomo Gorzanis and Vito Dornberg survives, indirect evidence of their enduring acquaintance appears in a dedication to Vito's wife penned more than a decade later by the composer's son. The latter

addresses the noblewoman as the wife of an Imperial diplomat and the Captain of Trieste, while describing his late father as a devoted servant of Their Lordships.

In 1567, Emperor Maximilian II dispatched Vito to Venice as an envoy. Operating on behalf of all three Habsburg rulers, Vito gathered critical political and military intelligence from Italy, the Mediterranean and especially the Ottoman Empire. His mandate, however, routinely transcended statecraft. Through his embassy in Venice, the Habsburgs – traditionally avid collectors – acquired rare and valuable objects and established contact with Venetian *maestri*.

Assessing these artworks with impeccable taste, Vito reported his findings directly to the court. Among other matters, he informed Emperor Maximilian of the acquisition of Titian's mythological canvases, and on another occasion offered a cautious assessment regarding a painting by the celebrated Paolo Veronese. In addition to paintings and sculptures, he procured Murano glass, luxury textiles, timepieces, and curiosities for the Habsburg courts, while also recruiting Italian gardeners and musicians into Imperial service.

The volume contains forty-two pieces listed in the table of contents. The dances are arranged in various grouping as dance triads of pass'e mezzo – padoana – saltarello (5), dance pairs of pass'e mezzo – padoana (2), pass'e mezzo – saltarello (1), and bal boemo or bal todesco – padoana (3). The volume also contains eleven free-standing dances: pass'e mezzo (3), saltarello (7), and gagliarda (1). Placed between these groups are two intabulations of four-part villanellas. The volume concludes with two imitative recercari.

The dance sets and individual dances are based on pre-existing music patterns – chord progressions or melodies – which are identified by the descriptive titles of the first dance in a group or of an individual dance. A pattern is normally repeated several times in a row in each dance, creating a series of variations. Some of these patterns are also found in a wide variety of arrangements in numerous Italian, as well as French and German, printed and manuscript sources of lute tablature, keyboard tablature or music for instrumental ensembles.

Gorzanis's book may have helped amateur musicians to practice diminution, ornamentation and various techniques mastered by professional musicians.

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