



DORIAN

SONO LUMINUS

*Sonatas for
Baroque Guitar*
Richard Savino

*Ludovico Roncalli:
Capricci Armonici (Bergamo, 1692)*



Count Ludovico Roncalli published his *Capricci Armonici (Harmonic Caprices)* for solo guitar in Bergamo in 1692. Consisting of nine 'suites' organized by key, it is one of the last publications of Italian music for the five-course baroque guitar printed during this period. They were first transcribed by Italian musicologist Oscar Chilosotti in 1881, and have since been transcribed by numerous others throughout the twentieth century.

Throughout this period they been performed by numerous classical guitar virtuosos and have become an integral part of the modern classical guitar repertoire. And thanks to Ottorino Respighi, who included a passacaglia by Roncalli in his *Ancient Airs and Dances*, an even broader contemporary audience is somewhat familiar with the sound of his music. Yet, Roncalli remains an enigmatic figure. Except for the information that he was an Italian nobleman provided by the title page of his publication, not much is known about his life or other compositions. This collection, his Opus 1, is his only known work.

According to documents housed in the Archivio di Stato di Bergamo, Ludovico was the son of Count Giovanni Martino Roncalli (1626-1700). And from the research of Italian musicologist Guido Zavadini, who specialized in the music of Donizetti, another composer from Bergamo, we learn that Ludovico was born in 1654 and died in 1713. These findings were published in the *Bollettino della Biblioteca Civica Angelo Mai* (Bulletin of the Public Library Angelo Mai, Bergamo) in 1943.

The documents in the *Archivio di Stato* also show that, like a number of other guitarists such as Gaspar Sanz and Francisco Guerau, Ludovico was also a priest. That he had connections with high officials in the Catholic Church is shown by the dedicatee of this publication: Cardinal Benedetto Panfilì (1653-1730), a well-known patron of the arts who also authored a number of libretti for numerous works composed by G. F. Handel and Alessandro Scarlatti in Rome during the early 18th century.

Furthermore, in the city of Bergamo the surname Roncalli is still one that holds special significance for the Catholic Church. In 1958 Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli of Bergamo was elected the 261st Pope of the Roman Catholic Church (Pope John II). Coincidentally he was born in 1881, the same year that Chilosotti first transcribed Ludovico Roncalli's Op. 1.

The works contained in *Capricci Armonici* reveal a wonderfully creative musician who has composed completely idiomatic works without needing to rely on gratuitous virtuosic pyrotechnics. This is not to suggest that his publication was directed toward amateurs, for in fact there are many difficult passages in this music. But Roncalli has clearly chosen a more elegant, restrained model, one that I would describe as possessing Italianate lyricism combined with a French textural aesthetic.

For this recording I have determined that the most likely tuning for the baroque guitar is one that includes a single bourdon on both the fourth and fifth courses. When carefully executed, this tuning allows for both cross-string *campanella* figuration as well as a clearer perception of bass lines.

Furthermore, it has been clearly determined by a number of scholars that such a tuning was more the norm in Italy. (see Gary Boye, 'Performing seventeenth century Italian guitar music', *Performance on the Lute, Guitar, and Vihuela*, Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 180-194.)

In my estimation noted guitarists such as Foscarini, Pellegrini, Granata, Bartolotti and Corbetta (during his Italian period) all used such a tuning. Moreover, Corbetta is the likely inventor of the so-called "French" tuning, with one bourdon on the fourth course, a hybrid compromise between a tuning with two bourdons and a tuning with none. The nature of his works changed significantly when he travelled to France and then to England. At the time the standard tuning of the guitar in each of these countries was one in which no bourdons were used (see the tuning chart in the 17th century Talbot manuscript and the publications of Mersenne and Grenerin). Furthermore, in a collection of recently discovered documents, the great Antonio Stradivari (1644-1737)—a contemporary of Roncalli who lived not far from him in northern Italy-- gives a tuning chart for the guitar which clearly shows bourdons on the fourth and fifth courses. (See: Stewart Pollens, 'Antonio Stradivari and baroque guitar making', *The Cambridge Companion to the Guitar*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 207-228.)

Nevertheless, to my ears, it is the music that dictates the tuning, and not the reverse. There are a number of examples within this collection in which Roncalli is clearly com-

posing points of imitation at different octaves and on different strings that can only be effectively realized using bourdons. Yet, as is the case in almost every example of tablature for baroque guitar, one finds exceptions that argue against the assumed tuning, and in this Roncalli is no different.

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Richard Savino's performances and recordings has been praised by critics throughout the world. In addition to receiving a *Diapason d'Or from Compact (Paris)* and a *10 du Répertoire (Paris)* the latter has also placed his Boccherini recordings in their "Great Discoveries" category which they deem as essential to any classical music collection. He has also recorded the romantic guitar music of Johann Kaspar Mertz virtuoso sonatas by Paganini and Giuliani with violinist Monica Huggett, sonatas for flute and guitar with flutist Laurel Zucker and the solo 18th baroque guitar music from Mexico by Santiago de Murcia. In January 1999 this CD was the "Global Hit" on the public Radio International program "The World," and in March '99 it was the *CD of the month* for the German periodical *Alte Musik Aktuell*. As a member of Ensemble Galatea he has recorded a collection of monody by Barbara Strozzi with soprano Emanuela Galli, works by Biagio Marini with Monica Huggett and the music of Giovanni Buonamente with Bruce Dickey and Ms. Huggett. More recent recordings feature the solo music of French guitarist Robert de Visée, the first full orchestral, period instrument versions of Boccherini Guitar Symphonia and the Op.30 concerto by Mauro Giuliani with the Portland Baroque Orchestra under the direction of Monica Huggett; and the first volume of his 6 CD series titled *The Essential Giuliani*. As a continuo player and accompanist Mr. Savino has worked with some of the world's most gifted artist and is a principal performer with the Santa Fe Opera, Houston Grand opera, New York Collegium, Portland Baroque Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, and Glimmerglass Opera. From 1986-98 Mr. Savino directed the CSU Summer Arts Guitar and Lute Institute. Presently he is director of the ensemble *El Mundo* and in 1995 and 2005 was Visiting Artistic Director of the prestigious NEH

sponsored Aston Magna Academy and Music Festival. An avid writer, Mr. Savino has had articles and editions published by Cambridge University Press, Editions Chantarelle and Indiana University Press. He is a lecturer at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and a Professor of Music at CSU Sacramento where he has been the only music professor to receive “outstanding and exceptional” and “best” sabbatical awards.