

Harpsichord & fortepiano

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Musical Instrument Research Catalog
(MIRCat)

Ligurian harpsichord investigated

Maurizio Tarrini writes about Tommaso I Roccagliata's harpsichord (1686) in a description of 1879

IN SURVEYING the Italian harpsichord production of the 16th to 18th centuries, the region of Liguria is certainly not in a remarkable position, considering the sources. Nevertheless '*strumenti da penna*' must needs have been widespread in the region.

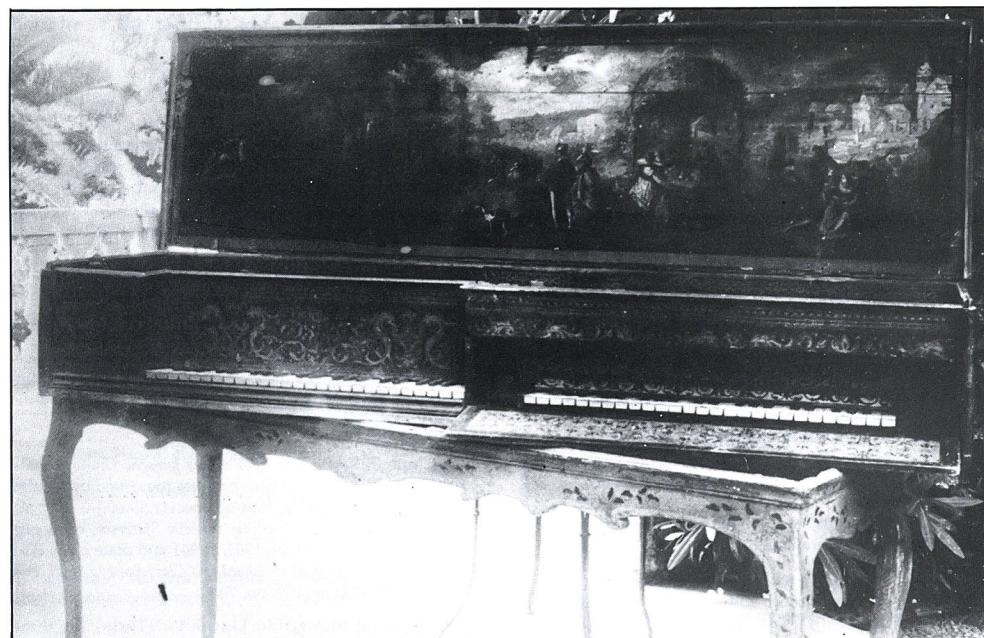
The oldest evidence of harpsichords in Liguria is iconographical: we refer to the wooden intarsias of the choir stalls in the cathedrals of Savona and Genoa, which date back to about the first or second decade of the 16th century. These intarsias show, amongst other various instruments, some harpsichords and a spinet.

The archive documents known up to now give little information about the activity of harpsichord makers in Liguria and it does not appear to have been a rooted local tradition. Obviously, harpsichords that were not produced *in loco* were purchased outside or makers were

called from other regions, but it also happened that local makers emigrated.

We have to wait for the late 17th century to have information about local harpsichord manufacture.

Giancarlo Bertagna indicated in 1982 the existence of a letter of 1879—discovered during the researches in the private archives of Pier Costantino Remondini (1829–1893), a Genoese lawyer and erudite, who was a pioneer of musicology and organology in Italy—containing a brief description of a harpsichord built in 1686 by Tommaso I Roccagliata of Santa Margherita Ligure. This document is of remarkable interest, because it testifies to the activity of the Roccagliatas¹—a family of organ builders whose origin is connected to the mastership of the Flemish organ builder Willem Hermans (1601–1683)²—also in the field of harpsichord making.



Double virginals by Hans Ruckers purchased in 1695 by Tommaso II Roccagliata. This picture was taken on the terrace of the Roccagliata-Ciurlo villa at Santa Margherita Ligure, c. 1929

works we are aiming to cover entirely, our concerts have included the music of Hummel, Reicha, Weber, Mendelssohn, Spontini and many, many others whose work has been so often forgotten—unjustly so if one considers their importance for the evolution and formation of the Classical and pre-Romantic styles.

We have also dedicated great attention to Lieder, with the performance of the Schumann and Schubert complete cycles.

Alan Curtis, Paul Badura-Skoda, Stanley Hoogland, Jörg Demus, Rosalyn Tureck, Temenuschka Vesselinova, R Könen, Melvyn Tan, Lucy van Dael, Christopher Hammer, Geoffrey Govier, Claudio Desderi, Tiziana Tramonti, Gerald Finley, Rufus Müller and Antonia Brown are only a few amongst the artists who have performed in our concerts, often extending their participation to teaching during the masterclasses organized by the Accademia.

THE instruments used in our concerts, all of which are restored and constantly checked in the adjacent workshop directed by Donatella De Giampiero, are principally a Schantz, dated back to the end of 1700, a Rosenberger from the same period, two Grafs (nos. 362 and 1041), a Lange dated 1835, a Simon and a Schrimpf from the same epoch, and 1849 Pleyel and other instruments by less famous makers but, however, equally appropriate for our needs.

Two recently acquired antique organs have given us the possibility of organizing concerts and seminars held by such artists as L F Tagliavini, Christopher Stembridge, P P Donati and Stefano Innocenti.

The Accademia Bartolomeo Cristofori, which by now is habitually recognized by the logo ABC,



collaborates on a continual basis with other prestigious musical and academic institutions, such as the Cherubini Conservatoire of Florence, the Centro Tempo Reale, directed by Luciano Berio, the Amici della Musica di Firenze (Friends of Music in Florence), the Centro di Studi Musicali Ferruccio Busoni in Empoli, the Florentine Centre for the History and Philosophy of Science, and many others.

The Accademia's hall and its instruments are also often used for recordings: just recently a CD dedicated to Hummel was produced on its premises [see review on page 37—Ed.]

In 1993 the Accademia was granted the prestigious Franco Abbiati Prize on behalf of the Società dei Critici Musicali Italiani (Italian Society of Music Critics), as the best Italian musical institution for its cultural initiatives.

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