

ROUTLEDGE REVIVALS

# Francesco Bartolomeo Conti

His Life and Music

Hermine Weigel Williams



Francesco Bartolomeo Conti

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For Jay, and my children

Jay III, Lynn Marie, Amédée Daryl, and Ruth Christine

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Auditorium of the Hoftheater, Vienna, designed by Francesco Galli-Bibiena.  
Engraving by Johann Andreas Pfeffel and Christian Engelbrecht, c. 1704.  
(Reproduced with permission of the Deutsches Theatrumuseum, Munich.)

# Introduction

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, three composers dominated the musical life of the Habsburg court in Vienna – Johann Josef Fux (1660-1741), Antonio Caldara (1670-1736), and Francesco Bartolomeo Conti (1682-1732). While Fux and Caldara have been the focus of numerous studies, with representative scores published in facsimile and modern editions, the third member of this trio has received relatively little attention.<sup>1</sup>

## Historical perspective

The very first study of Conti's life and works was a dissertation written by Josef Schneider in 1902 for the University of Vienna. Less than a third of that study, however, is devoted to a discussion of biographical materials and musical style. Instead, the major portion of the dissertation presents a thematic catalogue of the operas, oratorios, and cantatas. For each work cited, Schneider has provided the scoring and opening line of text of every aria, duet, and chorus.<sup>2</sup> In Georg Reichert's dissertation of 1935 on the history of the early eighteenth-century Viennese mass, also written for the University of Vienna, one can find a description and illustrated examples of two of Conti's masses.<sup>3</sup> Nothing else of any significance appeared from 1935 until the 1960s, except the biographical entry in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* by Bernhard Paumgartner, who described Conti as possibly being one of the most musically gifted of all the Viennese opera composers of his generation.<sup>4</sup> In 1963 Wulf Arlt published an extensive study of Conti's earliest extant opera, *Il trionfo dell'amicizia e dell'amore*, and in 1967 Stefan Kunze included a discussion of *Don Chischiotte in Sierra Morena* in his informative essay on the *buffo* librettos based upon the Don Quixote story.<sup>5</sup>

My interest in Conti as both a composer and a performer spans more than four decades. It began with the writing of a dissertation on his life and operas

(1964), continued with the publication of several of his instrumental *sinfonie* and a preliminary thematic index of his major secular and sacred dramatic works (1983), and eventually broadened into an essay which summarized his sacred music (1984).<sup>6</sup> More recently I have expanded my investigation to include the cantatas and intermezzos. This volume therefore represents a collation of past and current research which presumably provides a more composite picture of Conti's dual role as performer and composer and places into proper perspective his contribution to the history of the Austro-Italian Baroque era. The present study offers an opportunity to correct errors of judgment and fact set forth in my own writings cited above as well as in those recently published by others that have touched upon Conti's career in relation to Fux, Caldara, and Pietro Pariati. No attempt has been made to provide detailed information about the music composed by Francesco's son, Ignazio Conti. That aspect of the Conti saga will be explored at a later date. Similarly, the preparation of an updated thematic catalogue of the works of both Francesco and Ignazio Conti has been deferred until an analysis of watermarks and copyists can be more fully researched.<sup>7</sup>

### **The organization of this book**

The present study makes available to a wider audience material first presented in my dissertation. To this has been added my subsequent research on Conti's life and compositions, substantially expanding the perimeters of the dissertation which was limited to secular dramatic works. The book is divided into two parts. The first treats the biographical aspects of Conti's career; the second focuses on the librettists, the performing musicians, and the music. The text is illustrated with a limited number of examples, supplementing those found in appendix III of my dissertation and in *The Symphony 1720-1840*, Series B, volume II (devoted to a representative sampling of overtures by Italians in Vienna), the latter containing nine complete *sinfonie* by Conti.

### **Acknowledgements**

The material set forth in this study is based primarily on sources located in Vienna. I am indebted to Dr Günter Broschel, together with the current and past directors and staff of the Musiksammlung of the Österreichische

Nationalbibliothek who have graciously responded promptly to my every request for access to their extensive collection of manuscripts. Dr. Otto Biba of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde and the archivist of the Schottenstift were most helpful in making their respective manuscript collections available for my research. I am also indebted to the staff of the Stadtarchiv, Staatsarchiv, Universitätsbibliothek, and the Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv, where court documents, financial records, testaments and other personal papers, and copies of the *Wienerisches Diarium* were consulted.

I gratefully acknowledge the help received from the directors and staff of libraries outside Vienna who supplied me with microfilms and photocopies of Conti's manuscripts or provided information about their archival holdings. These libraries include: Stift Herzogenburg, Herzogenburg; Department of Manuscripts, the British Library, London; Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Berlin; Biblioteca musicale G. B. Martini, Bologna; Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Hamburg; Mecklenburgische Landesbibliothek, Schwerin; Library of Congress, Washington, DC; Biblioteca Nazionale Central and Archivio di Stato, Florence; Uppsala Universitetsbibliothek, Uppsala; Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, Münster; Meininger Museen, Musikgeschichte Archiv, Meiningen; Archiv města Brna, Brno; Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Dresden; Hessische Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek, Darmstadt; and the Osborn Collection in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

I owe special thanks to a number of people who helped me during the course of writing this book. First and foremost, I want to extend special thanks to my friend and colleague, Brian W. Pritchard, of the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand, who was ever willing and eager to respond to my numerous queries, especially those that related to sacred music performed in the Hofkapelle. His extensive knowledge of the music Antonio Caldara wrote for the imperial court proved to be an invaluable source of information. My thanks go also to Dr Wolfgang Payrich, Dr Inga Johansson, Dr Jürgen Neubacher, Dr Herta Müller, Dr Albert Ernst, Dr František Novák, Dr Rosalia Manno Tolu, Dr Urte Härtwig, Dr Giovanna Gronda, Dr Joachim Schlichte, Brian Moll, and the staff of the Burke Library of Hamilton College.

Permission to use excerpts for the musical examples was requested from the following: Schottenstift, Vienna: example 12.1-7; Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Dresden: examples 7.1a-d, 12.8a-b; Musiksammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Vienna: examples 8.2, 9.1-8, 10.1-5, 11.1-8; The Beinecke

Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, CT: example 8.1; and Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Berlin: examples 8.3-4.

I am indebted to Christopher Marshall of Auckland, New Zealand, who graciously offered to format the musical examples for this book. Last, but not least, I wish to thank my husband, Jay, who has helped in whatever way he could to foster an environment conducive to research and writing.

*Hermine Weigel Williams*  
*Clinton, New York, June 1999*

## Notes

- 1 In addition to pre-1970 studies by Ludwig Ritter von Köchel, John Henry van der Meer, and Ursula Kirkendale, among others, there are two recently published volumes of in-depth essays on the music composed by Caldara and Fux: Brian W. Pritchard, ed., *Antonio Caldara, Essays on His Life and Times* (London, 1987) and Harry White, ed., *Johann Josef Fux and the Music of the Austro-Italian Baroque* (London, 1992).
- 2 Josef Schneider, 'Francesco Conti als dramatischer Componist' (diss., University of Vienna, 1902).
- 3 Georg Reichert, *Zur Geschichte der Wiener Messenkomponist in der ersten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (diss., University of Vienna, 1935).
- 4 Bernhard Paumgartner, 'Conti', *Die Musik in der Geschichte und Gegenwart* (1952), II, 1640-43. An illustration accompanying this entry reportedly shows the opening folio of the overture to *Don Chisciotte in Sierra in Morena* (1719), but it bears no relationship to Conti's original overture. For a discussion of this problem, see chapter seven.
- 5 Wulf Arlt, 'Zur Deutung der Barockoper: *Il trionfo dell'amicizia e dell'amore* (Wien, 1711)', in *Musik und Geschichte. Leo Schrade zum sechzigsten Geburtstag* (Cologne, 1963), 96-145; Stefan Kunze, 'Die Entstehung eines Buffo-Librettos. Don-Quijote-Bearbeitungen', *Deutsches Jahrbuch der Musikwissenschaft* 12 (1967): 75-95.
- 6 Hermine Weigel Williams, 'Francesco Bartolomeo Conti: His Life and Operas' (diss., Columbia University, 1964); *idem*, 'Francesco Bartolomeo Conti: Nine Sinfonie', in Barry Brook, ed., *The Symphony 1720-1840*, Series B, vol. II: *Italians in Vienna*. (New York, 1983), xiii-xxxvi, 1-96; *idem*, 'The Sacred Music of Francesco Bartolomeo Conti: Its Cultural and Religious Significance', in Edmund Strainchamps and Maria Rika Maniates, eds, *Music and Civilization: Essays in Honor of Paul Henry Lang* (New York, 1984), 326-34.
- 7 A preliminary thematic catalogue was published in *The Symphony 1820-1840*, Series B, vol. II, xxxi-vi.

# Part I



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## CHAPTER ONE

# From the Medici to the Habsburgs

Francesco Bartolomeo Conti was born in Florence, Italy, on 20 January 1681/1682.<sup>1</sup> Little is known about his formative years except that before the age of seventeen he had become a highly esteemed theorbist in the service of the Medici family. Some measure of the young musician's talent and activities is revealed in correspondence dating from 1699 to 1701. In a letter of 11 March 1699 Don Diego Felipez de Guzman, Governor of Milan, had Secretary Sesto thank Cardinal Francesco Maria de' Medici for allowing Conti to participate in performances of the Carnival opera that season. Apparently the orchestra in Milan lacked a theorbist for the opera production and Cardinal de' Medici was asked to help fill the position with a theorbist in his employ. So delighted was the Milan audience with Conti's theorbo playing, Sesto asked if he might be engaged for the next Carnival season.<sup>2</sup>

A similar request for a theorbist came to Prince Ferdinando de' Medici in 1700. This time it was from Cardinal Fulvio Astali, asking if Conti could participate in the festival of the Accademia della Morte in Ferrara.<sup>3</sup> These letters, together with other correspondence between Cardinal Francesco and his nephew Prince Ferdinando, confirm that Conti played the theorbo for both sacred and secular performances, not only in his native city but also in other Italian cities as well.

In March of 1701 Conti travelled to Vienna, perhaps at the invitation of the Kapellmeister Antonio Pancotti. A letter written on 26 March 1701 by Marco Martelli, the Tuscan envoy in Vienna, to Cardinal Francesco Maria de' Medici in Florence seems to be the only extant document to mention this visit.<sup>4</sup> Martelli's letter describes the honour paid by Emperor Leopold I and other members of the Habsburg court to the young theorbo virtuoso since his arrival there at the beginning of the month. The letter also sets forth Conti's request to remain under the protection of the Medici family during what he described as his limited stay in the imperial city. On the basis of this request it appears that Conti had every intention of returning to Florence. What caused him to change his mind a few

days after Martelli's letter was written and to accept a position as court theorbist remains a mystery.

At the time of Conti's appointment, the Hofkapelle included one lutenist, Andre Boor (Pohr), and two theorbists.<sup>5</sup> Orazio Clementi was the principal theorbist, earning a monthly stipend of 100 florins. He had served the court as the sole theorbist from 1680 until 1697 when, because of his age, he required an assistant to help him shoulder the burden of the musical performances. Georg Reutter was appointed theorbist for this express purpose in 1697 with a monthly stipend of 25 florins.<sup>6</sup>

If Clementi had any hopes that Reutter might some day be his successor, he was soon to be disappointed. Reutter was far more interested in playing the organ than the theorbo and in August of 1700 he assumed an additional position as one of the court organists.<sup>7</sup> This meant the Kapellmeister had to find a musician who could eventually replace Clementi. Conti surely would have been a prime candidate, given his reputation in Florence and perhaps that is why he happened to be in Vienna during the month of March. Obviously the emperor and the Kapellmeister were favourably impressed with his talent, for he was offered a position with the same stipend as Clementi.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century the Habsburg court was well served by Italian composers, instrumentalists, and singers. Therefore the addition of another Italian to the list of court musicians was not particularly newsworthy. The office of the Obersthofmeister recorded the appointment of Conti as court theorbist in the *Hofprotokollbuch* on 12 July 1701. This brief entry was followed by a recommendation from the Kapellmeister that a monthly stipend of 100 gülden be paid to the theorbist retroactively from 1 April 1701.<sup>8</sup> Confirmation by the emperor that he agreed with this contractual arrangement appears in the *Hofprotokollbuch* on 23 August of that same year.<sup>9</sup>

Conti must have led a busy and interesting life during the final years of Leopold's reign. As a theorbist, he would have been expected to participate in large-scale secular and sacred works as well as in more intimate chamber works. The theorbo was used either as a solo or as a *basso continuo* instrument, often supplanting the organ or harpsichord. It could also share the continuo part with other instruments such as bassoon, violoncello, and harpsichord.

Unfortunately, extant materials offer few clues about Conti's musical activities in Vienna from 1701 to 1705. Only an occasional reference in the court's financial records serves as a reminder that he continued to perform his requisite duties. For example, an entry in the *Hofrechnungsbuch:1702* credits 'Franciscus

Bartolomaeus Conti' with 1800 florins. A notation beside this amount explains that Conti's annual stipend is supposed to be 1200 florins, but since he had not been paid for his services at the court from the beginning of April 1701 until the end of September 1702, he was now entitled to eighteen months' pay.<sup>10</sup>

That Conti received no payment for his services until October of 1702 should not surprise anyone acquainted with the financial problems which plagued the imperial realm. Often the court was so delinquent in the payment of wages that soldiers were forced to serve for four months or longer without pay. Musicians did not fare any better. They had grown accustomed to waiting long periods of time for the payment of their promised stipends. The situation was deplorable in 1701 and it did not improve with time. Throughout Conti's entire tenure at the court, this same problem persisted. The passage cited from the *Hofrechnungsbuch* is only the first of many such notices regarding delinquencies in payment of his stipend.

One of the most difficult problems facing the Habsburgs for more than a century involved the procurement of funds for the imperial treasury. The manner in which this could be effected varied considerably. Leopold was dependent upon subsidies and upon the Peter's pence which he received from the pope and for which he had to pay with his good conduct. He was dependent upon the reigning princes of the empire, or perhaps even more upon their business instinct, which extracted profits from every service rendered for as much as could be extorted by taxation.<sup>11</sup>

Musicians did not always wait complacently until court officials paid their stipends. Conti resorted to written petitions; others found more expedient methods to gain the emperor's attention. One author relates the following about the musicians serving Leopold I before 1690: 'And if as might sometimes happen, their salaries were not regularly paid, they would strike'.<sup>12</sup>

The financial plight of the court musicians contrasts sharply with the opulence of the nobility. Many of the nobles amassed considerable wealth from spoils of war as well as from unscrupulous dealings at court. Display of this wealth fostered an architectural renaissance in Vienna, the fervour of which was not lessened by the War of Spanish Succession. The narrow alleys which still bore the scars of the siege of 1683 were slowly transformed into elegant streets lined with buildings built in the Baroque style. The Pestsäule (1682-86) on the Graben and the Lobkowitz palace (1685-87) present isolated, but none the less excellent, examples of this style as it manifested itself prior to 1700.

Changes were also taking place outside the medieval walls of Vienna. Fields and villages, burnt and devastated during the Turkish siege, once again breathed with new life. Revitalized vineyards covered the slopes of Klosterneuberg; *heuriger* taverns flourished in Grinzing. The countryside, however, was not simply restored to its former self; the nobles were bent on transforming the landscape here just as they had done in the city. They built palaces with extensive and costly gardens, using them as summer residences. Moreover, this penchant for 'town and country' living, already in vogue with the Habsburgs, was to persist among the wealthy classes for many generations. As the seventeenth century drew to a close, Vienna began to look more and more like the capital of an empire. Strangely enough this transformation took place during the reign of an emperor who was intent upon preserving the *status quo*.

When Leopold I ascended the throne in 1658, the Habsburg realm showed only faint signs of its future brilliance. Leopold gave no indication of strength as a ruler. Contemporary accounts describe him as a thin, sickly, and melancholy figure of pale complexion, hollow cheeks, and a gross underlip, a peculiar characteristic of the Habsburg family. He deplored change. He wished that nothing concerning his private affairs or those of the realm should be altered.

As to his interests, there seems to be general agreement among contemporary accounts. Abbé Pacichelli, an Italian tourist visiting Vienna between 1670 and 1680, described them in this way: 'Next to the passion for hunting, with the concomitant sport of angling, Leopold's second great hobby was music and the theatre'.<sup>13</sup> The Duke of Gramont observed that 'he is fond of music, and understands it so far, that he composes very correctly most doleful melodies'.<sup>14</sup> The Habsburg family was indeed gifted with musical ability. Leopold composed and performed music for the court; his second wife, Claudia of Tyrol, played several instruments. In each of Leopold's four residences – Hofburg, Laxenburg, Favorita, Ebersdorf – musical entertainments were regularly held, especially to celebrate birthdays and name-days.

Musicians in the employ of Leopold I had opportunities to participate in musical activities outside the imperial capital, sometimes even outside the Habsburg realm. When, in 1702, the initial phase of the War of Spanish Succession caused a cessation of musical entertainment in Vienna, Giovanni Bononcini decided to find another venue where he and his colleagues could perform. The place he chose was Berlin, residence of Elector Friedrich III of Brandenburg and his wife Sophie Charlotte. There, in the summer of that same year, Bononcini composed and presented his one-act opera *Polifemo*. Georg

Philipp Telemann happened to be in Berlin when *Polifemo* was staged and his eyewitness account of the event, later printed by Johann Mattheson, mentions the names of some of the musicians playing in the opera orchestra. They include, among others, the composer and his brother, Antonio Maria Bononcini, playing cello, Francesco Conti playing theorbo, and Sophie Charlotte playing cembalo.<sup>15</sup>

The death of Leopold I's daughter, Maria Josefa, on 14 April 1703 was followed by a requisite year-long period of mourning, thereby causing the ban on festive entertainments to be prolonged. A limited number of performances of secular and sacred dramatic works, however, were permitted at the court, albeit in more modest garb and this meant that once the turmoil over the war subsided some, if not all, of the musicians would have resumed their performance duties as needed.

How soon Conti actually resumed his court obligations remains known, but he was probably on hand to play the theorbo for the 1704 production of Attilio Ariosti's opera *I gloriosi presagi*. It was not unusual for operas composed expressly for the Habsburgs to include an aria featuring the theorbo as a solo instrument. What is noteworthy about this particular opera is that in the aria 'Bellamìa, lascio ch'io vada', scored for alto, theorbo, and *basso continuo*, there appears one of the most virtuoso parts ever written for a theorbist. Did Ariosti compose this aria with Conti in mind? That possibility certainly exists since, as librettist for *Polifemo*, Ariosti was involved with musical events in Berlin in 1702 at the same time as Conti was performing there.

That Conti possessed talents beyond that of being a virtuoso instrumentalist was first brought to light with *Il trionfi di Giosuè*. This pasticcio oratorio was created with music by fourteen composers and given its initial performance in Florence in 1703. The score no longer survives, but the printed libretto by Giovanni Pietro Berzini does, and it is here that the composers are listed, each according to his place of origin. Among those so named are Francesco Conti ('fiorentino'), Giovanni Bononcini ('di Bologna'), Alessandro Scarlatti ('siciliano') and Tomaso Albinoni ('veneziano'). This same oratorio appears to have been sung again in Florence, only this time, with its title changed to *Giosuè in Gabaon*, it was dedicated to Princess Eleonora and performed (c. 1710) under the sponsorship of the Compagnia di San Sebastiano.<sup>16</sup>

In his role as a court theorbist, Conti was closely associated with some of the best composers in Europe and perhaps he availed himself of an opportunity to study composition with one or more of them. Men such as Marc'Antonio Ziani,

Giovanni Bononcini and Carlo Badia were at the peak of their careers.<sup>17</sup> Their dramatic works were in demand for every 'Day of Gala' at the Habsburg court.

Another musician who undoubtedly influenced Conti in the formative stages of his career was Johann Joseph Fux. Since 1698, Fux had been serving the court as a composer. Along with this position, he served as organist at the Schottenkirche on the Freyung and from 1705 to 1711 as Kapellmeister of St Stephen's Cathedral (Stephansdom), ultimately becoming the Hofkapellmeister during the reign of Emperor Charles VI. Fux occupied a commanding position in Vienna's musical life and was highly regarded as a teacher of composition.

Simon Molitor, noted for his pioneering research into documents pertaining to the musical life of the Habsburg court, was among the first to find evidence for an opera by Conti dating from the year 1704. According to Molitor's unpublished notes, Leopold I had a collection of operas composed at his command and staged for his enjoyment. In a document listing the contents of the emperor's opera collection, Conti is named as both court composer and theorbist. He is credited with an opera commissioned in 1704, which was dedicated to the emperor and performed for a court festival that same year. Unfortunately the opera's title is not mentioned.<sup>18</sup>

Since no opera by Conti with a date of 1704 has survived and no record of a 1704 performance of one of his operas for a court festival has been found, the notion that this music ever existed must await further evidence. Molitor thought he had found that evidence when he became aware of a catalogue of printed opera librettos available at the Biblioteca musicale 'G. B. Martini' in Bologna. Listed in connection with Conti's name were several librettos which the compilers of the catalogue believed he had set to music. Two had the same title, *Alba Cornelia*, but were by different librettists. One was associated with a 1704 production in Milan, and the other with a 1714 production in Vienna. Only the second one named the composer.<sup>19</sup>

Conti, of course, did have some contact with Milan when he was in the service of the Medici family and therefore it would not have been outside the realms of possibility to find him occasionally returning there to take part in musical events. Even the cathedral archives in Milan seem to corroborate this idea. A catalogue of the cathedral's music prepared by Claudio Sartori in 1957 cites works by a Francesco B. Conti (Florence, 1682-Vienna, 1732) and a Francesco Conti (Florence, 1760-Vigevano, 1822).<sup>20</sup> To the former are attributed four settings of the Magnificat, but an investigation into the musical compositions preserved in the cathedral's archives shows Sartori's catalogue to be in error. The settings of

the Magnificat attributed to the Conti of Vienna are in fact by ‘Doc. F. Conti’ of Vigevano.

Further proof that Conti was not involved with the music of the Milan cathedral comes from a register of its musicians. The *Annali* lists only two musicians with the surname of Conti: Francesco Conti, the ‘maestro di Duomo Novara’ who died in 1730, and Francesco Conti of Vigevano, cited above.<sup>21</sup> There is no mention of a Francesco Conti with the middle name of Bartolomeo nor of one connected with the court in Vienna.<sup>22</sup>

On 5 May 1705 Emperor Leopold I died, bringing to a close an important period of Habsburg history. Joseph I succeeded his father and his ascent to the imperial throne was greeted with considerable optimism by his subjects. Joseph was particularly fond of Italians and encouraged their presence in Vienna. He also continued his father’s interest in music, both by his patronage and by actual participation in the composing and performing of music for the court. The number of new works heard in Vienna increased considerably during Joseph’s brief reign as did the number of musicians employed by the court.

Out of deference to the deceased emperor, the court observed a year-long period of mourning which caused festive musical events to be curtailed or eliminated altogether. Musicians who had served under Leopold I did not automatically retain their respective positions under the new regime. Their reappointments were dependent upon the recommendation of the Obersthofmeister and were subject to the approval of the emperor.

Whether or not Conti served as a theorbist under Joseph I is a matter of some disagreement among writers of his biographical profile. Köchel, for one, claims that Conti was not employed by the court from 30 September 1705 to 1 January 1708, but he offers not a shred of evidence to support his statement.<sup>23</sup> Carlo Schmidl contends that Conti’s name is absent from the court register of musicians beginning on 30 September 1703 and continuing until 1711 when Charles VI was declared the new emperor.<sup>24</sup> Robert Eitner also believes Conti was absent from the court for eight years, but the dates he gives are for a period extending from 30 September 1705 to 1 January 1713.<sup>25</sup>

Enough evidence exists in various court records to contradict the information presented by these three authors. For example, the Obersthofmeister compiled a list of musicians who were to serve Joseph I and a copy of this list was entered into the *Hofprotokollbuch* on 4 January 1706.<sup>26</sup> Under the heading of ‘theorbist’, two names appear: Orazio Clementi and Francesco Conti, both with yearly stipends of 1200 florins. Financial statements in the *Hofrechnungsbücher* provide

additional evidence that Conti was in the employ of the Habsburgs without interruption from 1 April 1701 to 30 September 1706. Although his stipend was paid on an irregular basis, he nevertheless did receive the full amount of 6600 florins owed to him.

Sources other than court records also corroborate evidence that Conti was still in Vienna in the latter part of 1705, serving as a 'theorbist und Hof-Cammer-Musicus'. One is the *Kirchenbuch von St Stephan: 1704-1707*; another is the issue of the *Wienerisches Diarium* covering the period from 30 September to 2 October 1705. Both report that the marriage of Francesco Conti and Theresia Kuglerin of Edelfeld, the daughter of court violinist Ignaz Leopold Kugler, took place in Vienna on 1 October 1705.<sup>27</sup> There is no question that Francesco considered Theresia to be his first wife. He himself makes that very clear in several official documents, not the least of them his last will and testament dated 19 July 1732. In that same document, Francesco also refers more than once to his son, Ignazio, and to his sister, Cattarina Angela Conti.<sup>28</sup>

In the absence of birth or baptismal records, it has been difficult to determine the year or place of Ignazio's birth. At the time of his death on 28 March 1759, the obituary published in the *Wienerisches Diarium* stated he was 60 years old. On the basis of that information, the year of Ignazio's birth was figured to be 1699 and, since Conti did not move to Vienna until 1701, the place of birth was thought to be Florence.

Molitor drafted two handwritten versions of a biographical sketch of Francesco Conti. Both versions underscore the fact that Molitor was not aware of the theorbist's marriage to Theresia in 1705 nor had he found any pertinent marriage or baptismal documents in Florence. He was therefore left with the problem of finding a plausible explanation for the birth of Conti's first and only child, apart from suggesting that Ignazio might have been born out of wedlock. He reasoned that a talented musician, such as Francesco, would have been in great demand in his native city and therefore could have received sufficient funds to justify marriage at an early age. Then, without giving any sources to support his story, he relates that Francesco arrived in the imperial city with his infant son but without the baby's mother. Molitor suggests that the mother may have died in childbirth and this was the reason why Francesco took his sister, Cattarina Angela, to Vienna so that she could care for his child. Molitor also contends that the baby was initially named Francesco, then Francesco Ignazio and finally just Ignazio.<sup>29</sup>

In the testament cited above, Francesco mentions that Ignazio reached the ‘age of majority’ on 16 July 1729. If this date pertains to a birthday, as it presumably did, then at least the day and month, if not the year, of Ignazio’s birth can be determined. Is it possible that Ignazio was born in Vienna on 16 July 1706, a date that would have been nine and a half months after Francesco’s marriage? Is it possible that Ignazio was named for Theresia’s father, Ignaz Leopold Kugler?

In the course of research undertaken to write a biographical profile of Conti, Josef Schneider came to the conclusion that the *Wienerisches Diarium* incorrectly stated how old Ignazio was at the time of his death, causing a projected birth date of 1699 also to be in error. Schneider figured Ignazio’s birth date to be 16 July 1705 based upon the ‘age of majority’ phrase in the 1732 testament.<sup>30</sup> His calculation may be correct, but if it is, then Ignazio’s birth took place prior to the marriage of Francesco and Theresia in October of 1705. Schneider did not know the date or place of this marriage nor did he and Molitor realize that the Conti-Kugler union was the first of three marriages for Francesco.

## Notes

- 1 Ludwig Ritter von Köchel was one of the first to indicate the exact date of Conti’s birth; he based his information on a baptismal register in Florence. Köchel, in *Johann Josef Fux* (Vienna, 1872), 94n2, contends that the year of birth should be 1682, not 1681, because the Florentine calendar of that era calculated the beginning of a new year from the 25 March, not from the 1 January. Other scholars have reckoned the year of birth to be 1681 based upon information published at the time of Conti’s death, namely that he was then fifty-one years old. Wulf Arlt’s article ‘Zur Deutung der Barockoper’, in *Musik und Geschichte* (Cologne, 1963), 98n5, sets forth the idea that Köchel may have misinterpreted the date supplied to him by not realizing an adjustment for the Florentine calendar had already been factored in. There may be other explanations for the discrepancy between Köchel’s date of 1682 and Conti’s stated age at death. For example, when asked for the year of his birth, Conti might well have responded that it was 1681, never bothering to adjust the year to conform to the calendar system in use in Vienna. It could also be argued that Conti was considered to be in the fifty-first year of his life when he died, since he had already celebrated his fiftieth birthday on 20 January 1732.
- 2 Letter (11 March 1699) from Secretary Sesto of Milan to Cardinal de’ Medici in Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Collazione Mediceo, filza 5655.
- 3 Letters (6, 13 May 1700) from Cardinal Astali to Cardinal de’ Medici in Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Collazione Mediceo, filza 5599.
- 4 Letter (27 April 1700) from Pier Antonio Gerini, Secretary for Ferdinando de’ Medici, to Cardinal de’ Medici in Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Collazione Mediceo, filza 5781.

- 5 Andre Pöhr served the court from 1697 until his death in 1728. See Ludwig Ritter von Köchel, *Die Kaiserliche Hof-Musikkapelle* (Vienna, 1869), 71, 78.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 70.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 66. By 1703 Reutter is no longer listed as a court theorbist.
- 8 The terms gülden and florin are used interchangeably throughout the court records. There is, however, a difference between a thaler and a gülden. Figured on a 2:3 ratio, 40 thaler equal 60 gülden.
- 9 Vienna, Staatsarchiv, *Hofprotokollbuch: 1700-1709*, fol. 201v. For the original wording of these three entries, see appendix.
- 10 Vienna, Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv, *Hofrechnungsbuch: 1702*, fols 193v-210v. For a complete tabulation of the amounts and the dates of payment of Conti's stipend from 1 April 1701 to 30 September 1706, see this author's *Francesco Bartolomeo Conti: His Life and Operas* (diss., Columbia University, 1964), 22.
- 11 Paul Frischauer, *Prince Eugene* (New York, 1934), 130.
- 12 E. Vehse, *Memoirs of the Court: Aristocracy and Diplomacy of Austria* (London, 1856), II, 69.
- 13 *Ibid.*, II, 8.
- 14 *Ibid.*, I, 474.
- 15 Johann Mattheson, *Grundlage einer Ehren-Pforte* (Hamburg, 1740), 359.
- 16 The month when *Il trionfi di Giosuè* was first performed under the sponsorship of the Compagnia di San Marco has yet to be discovered. Since the libretto, printed in Florence by V. Vangelisti, has a publication date of 1703, it may be safe to assume that, under the Florentine calendar system, both the printing of the libretto and the premiere performance took place after 25 March. See Renzo Lustig, 'Saggio bibliografico degli oratorii stampati a Firenze dal 1690 al 1725', *Note d'archivio* (1937): 112, 249; Mario Fabbri, *Alessandro Scarlatti e il principe Ferdinando de' Medici* (Florence, 1961), 52-3.
- 17 Although the men named were most likely among the principal role models for Conti's career as a composer, one should not overlook the possibility that the women who were active as composers in Vienna during Leopold's reign could have influenced his work as well.
- 18 Simon von Molitor, 'Materialien zur Musikgeschichte', vol. A-D, fasc. viii, fol. 51. Since 'Hofkomponist' is used in connection with Conti's name, the inventory of Leopold I's operas probably was undertaken sometime after 1713.
- 19 Bologna, Biblioteca, *Catalogo del Regio Conservatorio di Musica 'G. B. Martini'* (Florence, 1942), V, 133.
- 20 Milan, La Cappella musicale del Suomo di Milano, *Catalogo della musiche dell'Archivio* (Milan, 1957), 146.
- 21 Milan, *Annali della fabbrica del Duomo* (Milan, 1885), II, appendix, 158.
- 22 A number of musicians living in the eighteenth century were named Francesco Conti and hence the confusion with the Conti that is the subject of this book. Further confusion has resulted from the spelling of his first name as 'Francisco' in the court records and from the occasional use of the diminutive spelling of his last name as 'Contini', the latter usually reserved to designate his son. Sometimes both the Conti and Contini version of Francesco's surname are in the same document. For example, a libretto for the *Intermedi* (1717)

published in Dresden indicates the third intermezzo is the composition of 'Signore Francesco Conti o Contino, Maestro di Capella di Sua Maesta Cearea'.

When 'Francisco' (surname omitted) has appeared in connection with a musical event in London, there have been attempts to link that name with Francesco Bartolomeo Conti. For example, several theatrical notices, reprinted in Part 2: 1700-1717, vol. I of *The London Stage 1660-1800*, mention a 'Signior Francisco', either as a performer or as one for whom a benefit concert was being presented. Two of these entries, paraphrased from the *Daily Courant*, are related to events that took place on 5 March 1702/3 and 18 May 1703 and the index for the volume in which they appear credits Francesco B. Conti with both of them. The second of these two events also mentions that 'there will be perform'd an Extraordinary Entertainment by an Eminent Master on the Arch-Lute, who never perform'd there before, accompanied by Mr Dean and others'. On the basis of the given (first) name and the mention of the archlute, editors of *The London Stage* reasoned (incorrectly) that the 'Francisco' and the archlute player were one and the same musician and then jumped to the conclusion that this 'Francesco' must refer to the Francesco Conti of Vienna. The most likely candidate for the 'Francisco' mentioned in this announcement is the singer identified as the 'Emperor's Crooked Eunuch', listed in an entry for 25 December 1699 in *The London Stage 1660-1800*, Part 1: 1660-1700, 521, a conclusion reached in the general index covering all volumes of *The London Stage*. See the *Index to The London Stage 1660-1800*, Ben Ross Schneider, ed. (Carbondale, IL, 1979).

In the February 1705 issue of *The Monthly Mask of Vocal Music*, John Walsh published 'A song set by Mr. Francisco, sung at the new Theatre'. This song begins with the words 'Of Chloe's charms' and may have been composed by the singer 'Francisco' cited above, for whom another benefit concert was given in London on 14 June 1710 in the Great Room of Peter's Court. See *The London Stage 1660-1800* Part 2, vol. 1, 224.

The identity of the 'Eminent Master of the Arch-Lute' remains a mystery. One of the first times the lute was advertised in the *Daily Courant* as an accompanying instrument occurred on 19 March 1703. At a concert on 18 April 1707, which occurred just a few weeks after the Union celebration concert in which Conti participated, an archlute accompanied the singer Francis Hughes. Admittedly the theorbo was called *arcileuto* in Italian and the equation of these instruments with one and the same person is not unreasonable. Nigel North, however, in his *Continuo Playing on the Lute, Archlute and Theorbo* (Bloomington, ID, 1987), 7, makes a distinction between archlute and theorbo when he writes: 'the great Francesco Conti was employed at the Viennese court and was well known as an archlute player, whereas [Leopold] Weiss, whilst visiting Italy, probably always played a D-minor tuned theorbo'.

There were other skilled players of the archlute who might have been on hand to entertain the London audiences. One known for his archlute performances in that city at the beginning of the eighteenth century was Thomas Dean, Jr, son of the violinist Thomas Dean, though he may not have been the 'eminent master' in the announcement quoted above. If 'the eminent master' were indeed Conti, that would add an interesting perspective on why he might have written obbligato parts for the lute in some of his early cantatas. The author thanks Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson for calling her attention to the 17 May 1703 announcement in the *Daily Courant*.

- 23 Köchel, *Johann Josef Fux*, 94.
- 24 Carlo Schmidl, ed., *Dizionario universale dei musicisti*, I, 365, s.v. 'Conti'. Eleanor Selfridge-Field relied on secondary sources for information about the court musicians for her article on 'The Viennese Court Orchestra' in Brian Pritchard, ed., *Antonio Caldara* (London, 1987), 115-51 and therefore perpetuates inaccurate data found in Köchel, Schmidl, et al. In particular, she lists Conti as a theorbist from 1701-03 and 1711-32, and mistakenly believes no theorbist served the court after 1732 (see pp. 147 and 128).
- 25 Robert Eitner, *Biographisch-bibliographisches Quellenlexicon* (Leipzig, 1898-1904), III, 36, s.v. 'Conti'. An engraving owned by the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek captures the scene of a banquet in the Knights' chamber (Vienna). Of interest are the musicians shown in a gallery overlooking the banquet hall, for one of them, looking very youthful, is holding a theorbo. Could this be Francesco Conti? This engraving is illustrated in several books on Baroque music, but there appears to be some disagreement about the date of the scene depicted. For example, George Buelow, in *The Late Baroque Era* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1994), 325, plate 49, dates the scene as 8 November 1705. Friedrich W. Riedel, in *Kirchenmusik am Hofe Karls VI (1711-1740)* (Munich-Salzburg, 1977), 312, gives 8 November 1712 as the date. See chapter three for more details about these engravings.
- 26 Vienna, Staatsarchiv, *Hofprotokollbuch: 1700-1709*, fol. 595.
- 27 Vienna, Stadtarchiv, *Kirchenbuch von St. Stephan: 1704-1707*, XXXVI, 361; *Wienerisches Diarium*, Nr. 226 (30 September-2 October 1705).
- 28 Vienna, Stadtarchiv, 'Testament / Francesco Conti', Nr. 6881/1732. Francesco spells his sister's name as Cattarina Angela Conti, but her name also appears in the court records as Catarin' Angiola Conti. For another document in which Conti names Theresia as his wife and also indicates her maiden name, see his petition of 1723, cited in chapter five.
- 29 Molitor, fasc. viii, fol. 4v.
- 30 Ibid.
- 32 Josef Schneider, 'Francesco Conti als dramatischer Componist' (diss., University of Vienna, 1902), 2 (original pagination).

## CHAPTER TWO

# The years 1706-1711

Joseph I was crowned emperor of the Habsburg realm on 19 March 1706. The change in imperial leadership was especially welcomed by Pope Clement XI whose prior relationship with the Habsburgs had been anything but cordial. Leopold I had remained faithful to the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church throughout his reign, but this did not prevent him from exerting undue political pressure upon the papacy. When the King of France challenged the hereditary claims of the Habsburgs to Spain and to the kingdom of Naples, Clement XI was asked by both claimants to decide these territorial issues. He attempted to settle the disputes through diplomacy, but his efforts proved to be futile. Prince Eugene's army continued to advance towards Rome, exacting exorbitant amounts of tribute from residents along the way. Just when the pope had given up all hope of halting a Habsburg invasion of his realm, Leopold I died.

Clement expected the new emperor to be more receptive to his peace initiatives, but he soon discovered that Joseph I was a mean-spirited and arrogant young man who let nothing stand in the way of his power. He showed little respect for the pope and openly defied papal authority. One of Joseph's first acts as emperor was to order the papal nuncio, Davia, to leave Vienna. He also had the audacity to demand that Clement grant free passage for his imperial forces through the Papal States, all for the sole purpose of annexing the kingdom of Naples.<sup>1</sup>

Some measure of how great the tensions between the papacy and the Habsburgs had become during the initial year of Joseph's reign is revealed in a papal brief issued by Clement XI on 2 June 1706:

The action of your Majesty's troops in throwing garrisons into the Pontifical States and unfurling their banners as in a conquered territory . . . is contrary to equity and reason, as well as to the regard due to the Holy See and the rights of the Church . . . Withdraw without delay your foot from where your soul would find certain damnation . . . take heed lest you stain the first-fruits of our