

ORGANISTICA
Rivista della
Fondazione

INFORMAZIONE
E ORGANOLOGICA

Accademia di Musica Italiana per Organo

Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Pistoia e Pescia

Ministero dell'Università e Ricerca - Ministero della Cultura

Assessorato alla Cultura del Comune di San Marcello Piteglio

Terza Serie - n. V

Anno XXXVI - n. 51

2024

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(Pier Paolo Donati)

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Informazione Organistica e Organologica is a peer-reviewed journal

(F.A.M.I.O. ONLUS)

FONDAZIONE ACCADEMIA DI MUSICA ITALIANA PER ORGANO

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Revisore Unico

Marco Pisaneschi

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Diretti di traduzione, riproduzione, adattamento riservati
Autorizzazione del Tribunale di Pistoia n° 390 del 08.09.1989

Stampa: Tipografia GF Press, Pistoia
31 Dicembre 2024

DENZIL WRAIGHT

SOME NOTES ON THE ROMAN STYLE IN HARPSICHORDS C. 1619

This short essay is dedicated to the memory of Patrizio Barbieri, a researcher whose work has long amazed me not only for its quality, but also for the breadth of its scope, and of course simply for the large number of articles and books produced. Although Barbieri scaled the mountains of intricate human thought and creative construction in the subject of tuning, he was equally adept in the collection of empirical data where great patience and application is necessary to garner the few available grains.

Barbieri's collection of excerpts from old books and the results of archival work published in 1989 gives us a large number of details about the makers of string keyboard instruments in Rome.¹ This is particularly interesting since there are relatively few Roman harpsichords from the period before 1600, and even after this date the number is surprisingly limited. Thus, Barbieri's archival work complements some of the few instruments which survive.

His later publication amplified the amount of data by drawing together several pages of Roman archival records concerning keyboard instruments.² In this respect Barbieri moved with the times in bringing this particular subject to a larger audience through the publication in English. Not long before his death he embarked on uploading previously published articles to an in-

¹ See Patrizio BARBIERI, *Cembalario, organaro, chitarraro e fabbricatore di corde armoniche nella «Polyanthea technica» di Pinaroli*, in «Ricerca», I (1989), p. 123-209.

² See Patrizio BARBIERI, *Harpsichords and spinets in late Baroque Rome*, in «Early Music», XL (February 2012), p. 55-72. [https://www.academia.edu/5162814/Harpsichords_and_spin-](https://www.academia.edu/5162814/Harpsichords_and_spinets_in_late_Baroque_Rome)

[ets_in_late_Baroque_Rome](https://www.academia.edu/5162814/Harpsichords_and_spinets_in_late_Baroque_Rome). An earlier version of this was presented in 2010, in Italian, as *I cembalari della Roma di Bernardo Pasquini: un censimento, con aggiornamenti sui loro strumenti*, in *Atti Pasquini Symposium 2010*, edizione Armando Carideo, Trento, Giunta della Provincia autonoma di Trento 2012, p. 139-53.



Workshop of Giovanni Battista Boni, c. 1619, in Rome; Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



1619 Boni, Brussels. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Clavecin_Boni.JPG?uselang=fr

ternet website, and through this resource I learned of several articles which I had not previously known.³ It is the area of Roman harpsichords that I have chosen, a subject obviously close to Patrizio's interests.

In 1997 I was able to attribute an unsigned Italian harpsichord kept in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, to the workshop of Giovanni Battista Boni, c.1619, in Rome.⁴ This attribution was based on the obvious stylistic similarity to three other Boni harpsichords, but the attribution depended specifically on the identity of certain mouldings; two of the instruments were signed and dated 1619.⁵ This method of workshop identification through mouldings was described, with examples of attributions, in a previous publication.⁶

The signed, 1619 Boni harpsichord in Brussels provided the starting point to identify other instruments. The Boni lower case moulding, was also found on a harpsichord in Vizcaya and in a harpsichord in Bristol, as a moulding on the nameboard.⁷ Since the Vizcaya keyboard has a signature *Gio. Bta. Boni Cortona fecit A° 1619*, i.e. Giovanni Battista Boni [from] Cortona fecit Anno 1619, but a nameboard ascribing the instrument to Albana 1645 it was essential to clarify the provenance of the Vizcaya instrument.⁸ Case mouldings established the close similarity of the two signed 1619 Boni harpsichords. By 'close' we can understand that some sharpening of the cutter (used to produce the moulding) might have been involved, but that the same tool was probably used.⁹

³ <https://independent.academia.edu/PatrizioBarbieri>.

⁴ Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, UK, inv. no. M.1.1933. <https://data.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/id/terminology/term-92926> Barbieri 2012, p. 70, note 18, is incorrect in locating this instrument in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Denzil WRAIGHT, *The stringing of Italian keyboard instruments c.1500 - c.1650*, Ph. D. dissertation, Queen's University of Belfast 1997 (Proquest Dissertation Publishing, no. 9735109), Part 2, p. 80-2. The thesis is available as a hardcopy (817 pages) or a PDF file from Proquest.

⁵ Brussels Musical Instrument Museum, inv. no. 1603, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, Miami, Florida, USA.

⁶ See Denzil WRAIGHT, *The identification and authentication of Italian string keyboard instruments*, The Historical Harpsichord 3, ed. Schott, H., NY, Stuyvesant 1992, 2/2024, p. 59-161. A second edition will be available

at www.denzilwright.com/Wright_Identification_and_authentication_2nd.pdf

⁷ After MacKenzie's death the Bristol harpsichord was sold at auction by Gardiner Houlgate on 17.03.2017.

⁸ Doris B Littlefield's assistance is gratefully acknowledged in preparing impressions of the mouldings.

⁹ See the discussion of this aspect in Denzil WRAIGHT, 2024, *Further notes on the use of mouldings in identifying Italian keyboard instruments*, www.denzilwright.com/mould.pdf, which is an updated and more accessible version of Denzil WRAIGHT, *Note sulle modanature. Quali mezzi per l'identificazione di strumenti musicali*, Collezione Tagliavini, Catalogo Degli Strumenti Musicali, a cura di John Henry van der Meer e Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini con contributi di Wanda Bergamini, Maria Cristini Casali, Friedemann Hellwig, Denzil Wraight, Volume II, (Bononia University Press 2008), p. 673-7.



1619 Boni Vizcaya, with Albana nameboard from another instrument. Photo: Malcolm Rose.

It is difficult to equip the reader with the means of testing the comparisons made here. Outlines of cross sections of mouldings on the printed page show the moulding, but give no means of comparison.¹⁰ Photos are of some assistance, but do not provide the accuracy. The comparisons described here were made by matching a casting of a moulding, a 'positive' with its 'negative' counterpart from another moulding, usually with 3x magnification. The 'negative' is effectively the tool with which the moulding was made so the fit (or lack of it) can easily be seen.

The Vizcaya nameboard could be shown to have a moulding matching the work of Albana. Thus, the 1645 Albana nameboard is genuine, but does not belong to the Vizcaya harpsichord, which is therefore taken to have a genuine Boni signature.

This comparison of the Vizcaya and Brussels Bonis is also interesting and useful since it enables us to see how much variation could be involved in the production of mouldings from the same workshop: apparently there was some in 1619, but very little.

The Bristol lower case moulding is identical with the Bussels Boni, but the upper case side moulding is identical with the Vizcaya harpsichord, thus it would appear that the Bristol harpsichord was made in 1619 *between* these

¹⁰ This is the method initiated by Hellwig, Friedemann, *Atlas der Profile* (Frankfurt/Main, 1985), which I followed in my monograph Wraight 1992. In my publication

negative moulding outlines were provided on transparent foil so that moulding cross sections could be compared, but this is an exceptional strategy for publishers.

two harpsichords, although we cannot deduce which of the two signed 1619 harpsichords was made first.

Through the arcades on the keyfronts of the Fitzwilliam harpsichord the first link was established to Boni, these being identical with those on the Bristol-Boni harpsichord. The lower and upper case side mouldings were found to be closest to the Vizcaya harpsichord: they are obviously the same style but cannot be said to have come from cutters at the same stage of sharpening. However, given the stylistic similarity of the Fitzwilliam harpsichord to the other three, there is no serious doubt about the origin of this instrument from the Boni workshop.

The 'stylistic similarities' referred to include the cypress cheek beside the keyboard which has a characteristic shape, and is sometimes unique to that a maker. Such shapes were probably marked out from a template, which is why one can find them in different instruments with a variation of as little as $\pm 1\text{mm}$. The Boni outline appears to be unique to his workshop, and the fit of the 1619 Brussels-Boni to the Fitzwilliam harpsichord is very good, even though the natural keycovers are shorter in the Cambridge instrument.

The use of planted mouldings is also characteristic of Boni's work, as on the jackrail (Brussels, Bristol, Vizcaya, Fitzwilliam). The area of the case below the keyfronts is sometimes panelled (Brussels, Bristol, Vizcaya), or there is panelling of the nameboard (Fitzwilliam).¹¹

Thus, we have established beyond reasonable doubt that the Fitzwilliam instrument is a product of the Roman, Boni workshop.¹² It is therefore surprising that Grant O'Brien should have cited the Fitzwilliam harpsichord's rose as evidence of a Neapolitan style.¹³ O'Brien listed 15 characteristics considered to indicate typical Neapolitan style, the fifth being an acute angle for the tail, around 30° . This is a feature shared by the four Boni harpsichords discussed here, so this raises the question: what is Roman style and what is Neapolitan?¹⁴ Are some of the features O'Brien identified as Neapolitan also part of the Roman repertoire?

¹¹ I gratefully acknowledge additional photographic documentation provided in 2003 by Malcolm Rose (1948-2022), which made some of these comparisons possible.

¹² The attribution to Boni was published in Wraight, 1997, Part 2, p. 80-1, albeit explained in more detail here.

¹³ «The soundboard rosettes are often of a composite nature with a part of the rosette glued to the top surface of the soundboard and a second part glued below the sound-

board. These rosettes are in several layers of wood and/or parchment. Often the lower central part is very deep in a kind of 'wedding cake' fashion, and sometimes the top layer is ornamented with one or more rings of moulded wood». Grant O'BRIEN (undated), *Characteristics of the Neapolitan School of Harpsichord Building*. <http://www.claviantica.com/Characteristics.htm>

¹⁴ The 1619 Brussels Boni has a 35° angle, the Bristol Boni a 33° angle.



Boni, Bristol. Photo: Malcolm Rose.

If we try to examine the style from the perspective of other Roman makers' work then we have the difficulty that there are few surviving Roman instruments before 1619 and few contemporary with Giovanni Boni. However, the acute tail angle used by Boni is not something we can prove in earlier Roman instruments. The earliest known harpsichord, the 1515 Vincentius, probably had an acute angle, but since it has been reduced in length the present angle of 30° is unsafe evidence.¹⁵ The harpsichord made by Hieronymus Bononiensis in Rome in 1521 does not have an acute angle; it is 56°. ¹⁶ A Bertarinus harpsichord of 1577 has an intermediate angle of 41°. ¹⁷

Another, apparently earlier harpsichord than Boni's time is signed *Filippo Fabri fece in Roma 1584* and has the more conventional 64° angle tail. Barbieri's information shows us a Francesco Fabri as born in 1591, who had a nephew Filippo (b.1636.1641), so it appears plausible that there could have been a Fabri *cembalaro* dynasty reaching back into the 16th century.¹⁸

Nearly contemporary with the Boni harpsichords we are considering is Albana's 1628 harpsichord with its 48° tail angle, which is not as acute as Boni's.¹⁹

A later harpsichord, such as by Zenti in 1656, has a 67° angle tail. Thus, Boni's use of the acute angle *might* be a continuation of an older Roman tradition, but that was not necessarily the *only* tradition. The evidence is too slight to permit us to reach a decision here.

One possible explanation could be that the acute angle is indeed typical of Neapolitan work, as O'Brien supposed, and that Boni was producing instruments in a style which was in demand.²⁰ This appears also to apply to the work of Vincenzo Bolcioni in Florence. Neapolitan instruments are indeed recorded in Roman and Medici inventories around 1600-1650, which confirms the in-

¹⁵ See John KOSTER, *More about Italian Single Strung Harpsichords*, in Eszter FONTANA, Klaus MARTIUS, Markus ZEPF (Hrsg.), *Hinter den Tönen - Musikinstrumente als Forschungsgebiet. Festschrift für Friedemann Hellwig zu seinem 80. Geburtstag*, Germanisches National Museum, Nürnberg 2018, p. 16-32. The harpsichord is illustrated in plan layout on p. 18.

¹⁶ Victoria and Albert Museum, London, inv. no. 226-1879.

¹⁷ See Friedemann HELLWIG, *The single-strung Italian harpsichord*, in *Keyboard Instruments: studies in keyboard organology 1500-1800*, ed. Ripin, Edinburgh, E. M. 1971, p. 29-38. Illustrated in Plates 39 and 40.

¹⁸ See Barbieri 1989, p. 150. This informa-

tion was unknown to Andreas BEURMANN, *Historische Tasteninstrumente*, München, Prestel Verlag 2000, p. 32, who was unable to trace a Roman maker with this name. The harpsichord is illustrated in Beurmann, p. 33.

¹⁹ 1628 Albana, Museo Civico, Bologna, inv. no. 1841.

²⁰ O'Brien did not envisage that Neapolitan makers *always* used an acute angle, but one of his exceptions, a harpsichord which he took to be Neapolitan had previously been assigned a Florentine or Roman origin: see Wraight 1997, Part 2, p. 327, W325. See also Darryl MARTIN, *EUCHMI (4302): A case study of harpsichord identity*, in «Galpin Society Journal», 63 (2010), 17-47, which argued for a Florentine origin.

terest in these harpsichords beyond Naples. One Aldobrandini record refers to a [...] *Cimbalo di forma ordinaria Napolitano* [...], as if there were something specific about Neapolitan harpsichords.²¹

We could even consider that Boni and Bolcioni might have been trying to pass off their instruments as Neapolitan and obtain a premium price for an 'exotic' instrument from further south, with the attendant extra carriage charges and probably even customs' duties. Such a practice is recorded in a handwritten, margin note which indicates that Mietke in Berlin around 1710 sold his own instruments at a premium of 300 Thaler as French imports, until the ruse was discovered; thereafter they fetched only 60-80 Thaler.²²

This idea of subterfuge could only credibly apply if Boni's instruments were anonymous, but as we have seen, two of Boni's harpsichords were signed. Furthermore, he was engaged by Cardinal Francesco Barberini for repair and maintenance work, then paid in 1631 to make an instrument for Taddeo Barberini.²³ Thus, Boni was anything but anonymous in this respect.

The Fitzwilliam harpsichord is interesting in another regard, which also connects with Barbieri's research: it originally had 3 registers. Another entry Barbieri gives for 11 January 1730 records a harpsichord from the estate of the late Princess Olimpia Giustiniani Barberini, which reads:

Un cembalo con sua cassa color di noce filettata d'oro, piedi intagliati, e dorati à tre registri sopra de quali è la tavola dorata dove resta scritto Ioannes Baptista de Bonis Cortonensis Romae fecit anno 1621, stimato scudi 15.-;²⁴

Princess Olimpia's harpsichord cannot have been the Fitzwilliam instrument since the description does not match, but this is the earliest documentary record we have of a harpsichord made by Giovanni Boni, superseding the 1629 date found by Hammond.²⁵

²¹ See Frederick HAMMOND, *Girolamo Frescobaldi*, Cambridge, MA, 1983, p. 364, note 28. However, the previous entry in the document reads *Due Cimbali grandi Napolitani con i semitoni spezzati, et sue casse, e piedi bianchi*. The contrast is with Neapolitan harpsichords having split sharps, so it may not be the case *shape* which is being considered, but the type of compass.

²² See Scheridan GERMANN, *The Mietkes, the Margrave and Bach*, in *Bach, Handel, Scarlatti: tercentenary essays*, ed. Peter Williams, Cambridge, 1985, p. 119-48: 134 and note 51,

referring to Carl Friedrich WEITZMANN, *Geschichte des Clavierspiels und der Clavierliteratur*, Stuttgart, 1863, 2/1879, p. 252. The annotation was found in Weitzmann's own copy of Matheson's *Das neu eröffnete Orchestre* (1713).

²³ See Hammond 1987, p. 37-41.

²⁴ See Barbieri 2012, p. 69.

²⁵ See Frederick, HAMMOND, *Some notes on Giovanni Battista Boni da Cortona, Girolamo Zenti, and others*, in «Galpin Society Journal», 40 (1987), p. 37-47: 38; 1629 is the earliest date for a *manufactured* harpsichord that Hammond was able to find.

Surviving Roman three-register harpsichords are rare, but Barbieri listed 37 instruments described as having *tre registri* (or *3 registri*) in his article. In most instances of the archive documents we cannot tell how the three registers were disposed, and this is a topic to which Barbieri gave some attention in his article. He suggested the following possibilities:

$$\begin{array}{l} 3 \times 8' \\ 2 \times 8' + 1 \times 4' \\ 1 \times 16' + 2 \times 8' \\ 2 \times 8' + \textit{tiorbino} \end{array}$$

The Fitzwilliam instrument falls into the category of $3 \times 8'$, which makes it the earliest known example of this type; there are only seven.²⁶ Unfortunately the original form of the Fitzwilliam harpsichord has not survived; some details of the execution (the original nuts) are missing and so the exact intention is unknown. It could have been intended that all registers be played together, thereby giving more volume, or a different timbre, than a single or two-register instrument.

Whether a $3 \times 8'$ instrument would be any louder is questionable since one must remember that the player must supply the energy to pluck the strings. The general impression I have is that old harpsichords were probably lighter quilled than nowadays. The requirement to be heard in large concert halls was probably not as significant then as for us.

One of the registers could have been arranged to produce a different timbre of sound. Of course, this happens anyway with the third register which is nearest the tuning pins; this has a decidedly more nasal character. Another way in which this could be achieved is if the strings are of gut; then it would effectively be a gut-strung register.

Such an idea is suggested by Barbieri's document citing a *tiorbino*, which was an instrument sold by the widow of the harpsichord maker Valerio Piccini to the fellow instrument makers Boni and Garzini. *Un tiorbino levatore di cassa senza cassa*.²⁷ O'Brien and Nocerino have discussed the possible implementation of this *tiorbino* type with gut stringing, but convincing evidence of an

²⁶ See Wraight, 1997, Part 1, p. 139-43. The Fitzwilliam harpsichord was described in an article by Trevor BECKERLEG, *The Fitzwilliam museum harpsichord*, in *Italian music at the Fitzwilliam*, Cambridge, 1976, p. 23-8. Grant O'Brien produced an as yet unpublished report for the museum in 1994,

which I first saw in 2003, when it was forwarded to me by Alexander MacKenzie, the then owner of the Bristol Boni.

²⁷ See Barbieri 2012, p. 65. This is Giuseppe Boni, the son of Giovanni Battista, documented in Barbieri 1989, p. 148-9: born c. 1629-30.

existing instrument has not yet emerged. The difficulty is simply a practical one: gut strings require a hole through the tuning pegs, but wire harpsichord strings do not. We know what harp tuning pegs look like and none such have yet been found in a harpsichord.

Nevertheless, there are two simple strategies available to the instrument maker to produce a softer sound with wire strings, imitating a harp or lute. Either the string is damped with cloth or leather very close to the nut, or a soft material such as leather is used to pluck the string. Another entry in Barbieri's list records, again from the deceased Princess Olimpia reads: *Un cembalo dipinto di fuori, e di dentro à due registri coll'arpetta ottava in sesta con piedi intagliati coloriti [...] stimato scudi 25.—*.²⁸ In this case we have a «harp register» at octave pitch, which will not have been the aim in the Fitzwilliam harpsichord, but the name *arpetta* is suggestive of a type of sound.

Although Barbieri's list contains many descriptions of three-register instruments, none of them can be clearly linked with the Fitzwilliam harpsichord. Thus, its provenance remains a mystery. In this connection the apparent coat of arms on the underside of the outer case is of interest in our attempt to trace the history of ownership of the instrument.

The reader can consult the excellent colour photos at the museum's website which also show the sumptuously floral-decorated outer case in the Italian *argento meccato* technique [silver leaf with changing varnish], which I take to be the basic finish under the extensive painting.²⁹ This is the usual Italian approach, not the use of gold leaf.

There is a large amount of silver leaf involved in this decoration, for which reason the instrument will have been made for a wealthy owner. Boni is known through Hammond's studies to have made instruments for the Barberini family. This might also explain why the Fitzwilliam instrument is not signed, since a lowly *cembalaro* could not be allowed to elevate himself with his signature into the presence of his peers. Vito Trasuntini's inscription on the nameboard as *auctore* of the 1606 *Clavemusicum Omnitonum*, made for Camillo Gonzaga, is an unusual exception in this respect.³⁰

The four harpsichords and an organ Boni made for the Barberini were documented by Hammond through payments as follows:³¹

²⁸ See Barbieri 2012, p. 69.

²⁹ <https://data.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/id/object/141209> When I examined the instrument I was mostly occupied with the harpsichord, not with the outer case, for which reason I cannot supply a definitive opinion

whether the outer case is original to the manufacture, and whether the decoration is original.

³⁰ Museo Civico, Bologna, inv no. 1767.

³¹ See Hammond, 1987, p. 38-9. The text of the documents was given in the respective endnote.

Taddeo Barberini in April 1631: 26 scudi + 9.90 decoration.³²

Taddeo Barberini in February 1632, (graviorgano): 32 scudi.³³

Cardinal Antonio Barberini in September 1633: 90 scudi.³⁴

Cardinal Francesco Barberini August 1634: 50 scudi.³⁵

Taddeo Barberini in September 1635, harpsichord for one of his singers: 25 scudi.³⁶

When we amplify Hammond's information with Barbieri's documents, mostly from inventories made after the owner's death, which are much more extensive in description, then we can see that the value of a harpsichord was about 15-30 scudi. If *d'oro* was involved then the price was higher. A harpsichord with a gilded case and carved, gilded stand could be valued at 100 scudi³⁷. Since the Fitzwilliam stand is merely turned and gilded we could expect a lower price, but the figures of 50 or 90 scudi the Barberini cardinals paid could apply to the Fitzwilliam harpsichord.

Such a titled owner could well have had his coat of arms added to the decoration in a prominent position, and we find an example of this in the 1701 Mondini harpsichord, where a cardinal's *stemma* is worked in relief on the outside of the front lid flap, and gilded (probably *argento meccato*).³⁸ It is therefore curious (and unique) that the monochrome *stemma* on the Fitzwilliam harpsichord is on the *underside* of the outer case and therefore not readily visible. It would have to be established first whether the *stemma* is contemporary with the manufacture of the outer case, or added at some later date.

The actual heraldic device consists of four sheaves of wheat surmounted by two lilies.³⁹ A family crest has not been found which would correspond to this *stemma*, but following Montanari's suggestion, double lilies were found in 92 coats of arms of Tuscan families, albeit without sheaves of wheat. This nevertheless raises the possibility of a Tuscan connection at some stage of the instrument's history.⁴⁰

³² See Hammond 1987, p. 45, n. 11: *p[er] un cimbalu nuouo hauuto da lui p[er] mio seru[izio] et il r[est]o [of sc. 35.90] p[er] altre spese fatte p[er] coprire, e adornare d[ett]o cimbalu.*

³³ Ibidem, p. 45, note 12: *il prezzo di un grauiorgano accomodato di tutto punto hauuto da lui p[er] n[ost]ro seru[izio].*

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 39, gives the price as 90 scudi, but in the corresponding endnote no contents of the cited documents are given.

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 45, note 14: *un Cimbalu e timpano dorato in piedi compro da lui.* It is unclear to what *timpano* refers.

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 39, 45, n. 15: 27. 9. 1635: *sc. 25 to Gio: batta de Bonis cimbalaro p[er] un'cimbalu prouisto p[er] Giuseppe Musico di S. E.cc.za.*

³⁷ See Barbieri 2012, p. 64: *5 July 1690, inv. qm Ecc.mo Domenico Colonna: [f. 112'] Un*

cembalo a 3 registri con sua cassa di legno dorata con suo piede sotto intagliato dorato, scudi 100.

³⁸ See Beurmann p. 67, where Cardinal Benedetto Pamphilij is suggested to be the owner. The *stemma* is quartered, indicating the additions of other family's crests so it requires further study.

³⁹ Dr Victoria Avery, Emma Darbyshire, and Tim Mathews kindly assisted in having a photograph made of the coat of arms in order to facilitate this search.

⁴⁰ Giuliana Montanari, Donatella Degiampietro, and Marco Bonacini generously contributed to the search for a family crest, which is gratefully acknowledged. Montanari suggested searching the online resource *Raccolta Ceramelli Papiani* in Florence, which yielded the result of the 92 stemmi.

SUMMARY - SOMMARIO

Two signed harpsichords made by Giovanni Battista Boni in 1619 in Rome enable us to identify two other, unsigned harpsichords as products of his workshop. The Fitzwilliam Museum harpsichord is sumptuously decorated with flowers over *argento meccato* and the case is made in a style which appears to be Neapolitan, but this may represent the continuation of an older Roman tradition. It is also the oldest surviving Italian harpsichord with a 3x8' disposition, although we cannot determine whether any special effects were incorporated to change the timbre of one of the registers. Documents collected and published by Patrizio Barbieri give us a better understanding of the instruments made in Rome in the 17th century and their value. They help point to a possible commission from the Barberini family for the Fitzwilliam Museum harpsichord.

Due clavicembali costruiti a Roma e firmati da Giovanni Battista Boni nel 1619, permettono di identificare come prodotti della sua bottega altri due strumenti non firmati. Il clavicembalo del Fitzwilliam Museum, sontuosamente decorato con fiori su argento meccato, ha la cassa realizzata in uno 'stile' che sembrerebbe di Scuola napoletana, ma che potrebbe invece rappresentare la continuazione di una tradizione romana nata nel XVI secolo. Mentre siamo certi che si tratti del più antico clavicembalo italiano sopravvissuto con una disposizione 3x8', non possiamo stabilire se fosse dotato di speciali congegni per modificare il timbro di uno dei registri. I documenti raccolti e pubblicati da Patrizio Barbieri permettono di conoscere meglio gli strumenti costruiti a Roma nel XVII secolo, compreso il loro valore monetario, e concorrono ad indicare la famiglia Barberini quale committente del clavicembalo conservato nel Museo Fitzwilliam.

Denzil Wraight graduated in Philosophy then embarked on a career of making and researching the history of Italian instruments. A significant preliminary subject was the study of methods of the identification and authentication of unsigned instruments and the collection of data. This culminated in a PhD on the stringing of Italian string keyboard instruments in 1997, which dealt with the subject of pitch and compasses. The production of instruments has proceeded in parallel, such as harpsichords with *tasti spezzati*, but also reproductions of Cristofori's fortepiano. Research to understand the guiding ideas behind the instrument makers' work resulted recently in the decyphering of the tuning of Trasuntini's monochord for the *Clavemusicum Omnitonum* and finding a hidden plan in Vicentino's *L'Antica Musica* which is both the design of his Archicembalo and theoretical scheme of the enharmonic intervals.

Denzil Wraight dopo la laurea in Filosofia ha intrapreso la carriera della ricerca sulla storia degli strumenti a tastiera italiani e la loro costruzione, occupandosi preliminarmente della raccolta dei dati e della fondamentale questione relativa ai metodi d'identificazione e autenticazione degli strumenti non firmati. Tali studi sono culminati nel 1997 in un dottorato di ricerca sull'armatura degli strumenti italiani a tastiera, sul corista e sui temperamenti. Parallelamente è proseguita la produzione di strumenti, compresi clavicembali con *tasti spezzati* e fortepiani di Bartolomeo Cristofori. La ricerca per sapere quali fossero le idee guida seguite dai costruttori, ha portato recentemente a decifrare l'accordatura del monocordo per il *Clavemusicum Omnitonum* del Trasuntino, e al ritrovamento di un piano nascosto ne *L'Antica Musica* del Vicentino: al tempo stesso disegno dell'Archicembalo e schema teorico degli intervalli enarmonici.