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Johann Joseph Fux and the Imperative of Italy

Harry White

The formative influence of Italian musical culture on the Austrian High Baroque is so extensive and so widely acknowledged that we could be forgiven for taking it for granted.¹ Even if we seek to characterise the practice of music at the imperial court in Vienna between c.1690 and 1740 as an astonishing combination of Italian *savoir faire* and Germanic purposefulness, it is not always easy to maintain a balance between the almost instinctive reliance on Italian musical thought which the Hofmusikkapelle maintained, and the doctrinaire tendencies which the court cultivated precisely through the agency of Italian prototypes, generic models and techniques of composition. Nevertheless, the dependence of Vienna on Italian musical practice and personnel (which became virtually exclusive from the middle decades of the seventeenth century onwards), was so pervasive during the High Baroque period that the appointment of Johann Joseph Fux as court composer in 1698, as deputy Kapellmeister (from 1711) and Hofkapellmeister (from 1715 until his death in 1741), has always been rightly regarded as an exceptional sequence of events. The depiction of Fux as a lone Austrian, indeed as a Styrian peasant elevated above the heads of his more sophisticated Italian contemporaries at the imperial court is not merely the patriotic invention of nineteenth century Austrian musicology (although it is certainly that);² it is also a reasonably accurate reflection of the status quo which prevailed in almost every department of imperial musical life for most of the eighteenth century. The roll call of Italian masters which dominated musical life at the imperial court for decades is scarcely in question here. But the exceptional condition of Fux's pre-eminence, not only as Hofkapellmeister, but as the very embodiment of the Austro-Italian Baroque, is all the more intriguing on that account.³

¹ The literature on this topic is vast. For a convenient summary of the formative influence of Italian musical practice in Vienna from 1619 until 1741, see Theophil Antonicek, *Vienna. 3. Baroque Era*, in: *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, London etc. ²2001, vol. 26, pp. 549–554.

² See Carl Schnabl, *Johann Joseph Fux, der österreichische Palestrina. Eine biographische Skizze*, in: *Jahrbuch der Leo-Gesellschaft* (1895), pp. 153–162.

³ This aspect of Fux's achievement has remained a preoccupation in biographical and stylistic studies of the composer since the publication of Ludwig von Köchel's *Johann Josef Fux*, Vienna 1872, reprint Hildesheim 1988.

In this short paper, I would like to engage the general theme of this collection of essays on foreign musicians in Rome, in order to examine the conjunction of Italian influence and Austrian conservatism which Fux's own music so unmistakably personifies, and also in order to survey the disparity between our poor knowledge of Fux's own path to the imperial service and the astonishing extent of his musical legacy as an Italian-trained or Italian-influenced composer. I would also like to propose ways in which Fux's reception of Italian music can help to explain the concept of an Austro-Italian Baroque, and to draw upon the work of other Fux scholars in order to meditate on the difficulty of knowing so little of Fux's Italian background (if anything at all) by comparison with the unmistakable stamp of Italy in general (and Rome in particular) on his own musical imagination. I will consider these matters under three headings: (1) The ›Lost‹ Roman Years (2) The Musical Authority of the *Gradus ad Parnassum* and (3) The Roman Complexion of Fux's Compositional Practice.

The ›Lost‹ Roman Years

Fux's progression from provincial student in Ingolstadt (where he was organist at the church St Moritz from 1685 until the beginning of 1689) to court musician in Vienna (where he was officially appointed in 1698) has never been satisfactorily explained. Shortly after his death, Johann Adolph Scheibe published a pseudo-mythological fable in *Critischer Musikus* (1745) in order to »explain how the famous Kapellmeister Fux entered the imperial service«. ⁴ This account was later taken up by Johann Friedrich Daube in his *Anleitung zum Selbstunterricht in der musikalischen Composition* in 1798, in which Daube stated that Fux was in the service of a Hungarian bishop when his music first came to the attention of the emperor, Leopold I. In Daube's account, the emperor heard two masses by Fux: the first was acknowledged as the work of Fux himself and was mocked by the Italian musicians accompanying the emperor. The second was disguised as the work of an unknown Italian and was highly praised. The emperor then rebuked his musical retinue and revealed that the second mass was also by Fux and he promptly appointed him to the imperial service, »much to the annoyance of the Italian party«. ⁵

Three factors support the general thrust of these anecdotal accounts: Fux's *Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis*, dedicated to Leopold I, can be dated to 1695. Its dedicatory letter refers to the fact that the emperor had already heard the work, and its

⁴ See Johann Adolph Scheibe, *Critischer Musikus. Neue, vermehrte und verbesserte Auflage*, Leipzig 1745, p. 549.

⁵ See Johann Friedrich Daube, *Anleitung zum Selbstunterricht in der musikalischen Composition*, Vienna 1798, p. 274. For further commentary on the relationship between the two versions of this account in Scheibe and Daube, see Hellmut Federhofer, *25 Jahre Johann Joseph Fux-Forschung*, in: *Acta musicologica* 2/2 (July–December 1980), pp. 155–194: 158–160.

title-page states that its musical theme had been provided by a singer employed in the Hofmusikpelle, Franz Ginter.⁶ Secondly, in 1695, when this mass was (almost certainly) performed for the laying of the foundation stone of the Dreifaltigkeitskirche in Vienna, Fux must have been in the employ of an influential patron. The »Hungarian bishop« to which Daube refers may well have been Leopold Karl von Kollonitsch, archbishop of Hungary, who frequently resided in Vienna and who knew Leopold I from youth.⁷ Finally, Fux's marriage in June 1696 to Clara Juliana Schnitzenbaum, the daughter of a family well-connected in the service of the imperial household, argues strongly that the composer had by this time made important contacts with the court. One of the witnesses to the marriage was Andreas Schmelzer, imperial ballet and chamber music composer and son of the former Kapellmeister, Johann Heinrich Schmelzer.

As Rudolf Flotzinger has argued, the circumstantial evidence in favour of Fux's employment by Kollonitsch would provide an explanation not only for Fux's introduction to the emperor's own circle of musicians, but more immediately for the means whereby Fux acquired the contemporary compositional techniques which many of his early works display.⁸ Kollonitsch's extensive visits to Rome in the late 1680s and early 1690s may even substantiate the possibility that Fux undertook an »italienische Reise« of some kind, or at least that he accompanied his patron to Italy and thereby absorbed the latest musical developments available to him there. Kollonitsch, for example, travelled to Rome for the 1689 conclave which elected Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni as pope. Both Arcangelo Corelli and Bernardo Pasquini were either officially engaged or frequently present at Ottoboni's residence and his titular organist, Ottavio Pitoni, was known as a keen theorist and emulator of Palestrina. All three composers – Corelli, Pasquini and Pitoni – have been advocated by Flotzinger as important influences which Fux may have directly and personally absorbed at first hand.⁹ Fux's arrangement of a concerto movement by Corelli as a partita for two violins and continuo, or even the ascription to him of works by Palestrina and Legrenzi, likewise suggest circumstantial evidence of a study trip in Italy, but it

6 See Friedrich Wilhelm Riedel, *Zur Missa SSmae Trinitatis von Johann Joseph Fux*, in: *Symbolae historiae musicae: Hellmut Federhofer zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. id. and Hubert Unverricht, Mainz 1971, pp. 117–121.

7 Although Federhofer, *25 Jahre* (see note 5), p. 159, suggests that this was »probably« Kollonitsch, this identification cannot be established with absolute certainty. I am grateful to Thomas Hochradner and Herbert Seifert on this account.

8 See Rudolf Flotzinger, *Johann Joseph Fux auf dem Weg von Hirtenfeld nach Wien*, in: *Fux-Studien. Zur Biographie, Forschungsgeschichte, Stilkritik*, ed. id., Graz 1985, pp. 52–63, and id., *Die biographische Fux-Forschung 1991: Fragen–Ergebnisse–Möglichkeiten*, in: *Johann Joseph Fux und seine Zeit. Kultur, Kunst und Musik im Spätbarock*, ed. Arnfried Edler and Friedrich Wilhelm Riedel, Laaber 1996, pp. 95–98.

9 Flotzinger, *Johann Joseph Fux auf dem Weg von Hirtenfeld*, pp. 58s. Flotzinger adduces that the gaps in our knowledge of Fux's biography between 1689 and 1695/1696 correspond with the period when Kollonitsch most frequently visited Rome.

remains the case that the lost Roman years of Johann Joseph Fux are unlikely to be reconstructed, if indeed they ever actually took place. Flotzinger has suggested that Pitoni in particular may have exercised direct influence on Fux, and that Fux may even have been his pupil, albeit briefly, given Pitoni's post as Kapellmeister at the German College in Rome, which is where Kollonitsch customarily resided when he went there. Pitoni's own reputation in Italy as 'the Palestrina of the 18th century' and his *Guida armonica* of 1701–1708 are strongly suggestive of precedents which could have influenced Fux's development as a composer (and later, of course, as a theorist).¹⁰ In particular, Pitoni's abiding insistence on a distinction between conservative and modern style (both in his theoretical writings and in his own work as a composer of church music) represents a fundamental division which Fux was to adopt as his own, albeit differently.

The Musical Authority of the »Gradus ad Parnassum«

Although it is attractive (and even compelling) to adduce this kind of circumstantial evidence in order to explain Fux's emergence as a fully-fledged composer at the imperial court in 1698, the real problem is that our empirical retrieval of his training as a composer is so poor. In the *Gradus ad Parnassum*, published in 1725 when Fux was 65 years old, he describes himself as self-taught, just as he had described himself as a »new practitioner of sacred music« in the dedicatory epistle to the *Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis* in 1695. He acknowledges no teacher (other than Palestrina, of course), and even there his debt is circumspect. As everyone familiar with the matter knows, Palestrina's *actual* presence in the *Gradus* is zero: Fux prefers instead to quote from his own compositions to illustrate his understanding of the various categories of style and compositional technique which he passes on to the obedient pupil, Josephus. Other than calling the teacher Aloysius and commending (in no uncertain terms) Palestrina as the light of music and the sovereign exemplar of all that is good in music, Fux's recourse to Palestrina and the Roman School is strikingly at second or even third hand.¹¹ Recent research on the *Gradus* by Matthias Lundberg would even suggest that Fux's exemplars in several cases predate Palestrina, even if his pedagogical system is indebted to more recent models, including of course those of Diruta, Bernhard, Giovanni Maria Bononcini and even Pitoni, all of whom explicitly or

10 See Siegfried Gmeinwieser, *Pitoni, Giuseppe Ottavio*, in: The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (see note 1) vol. 14, pp. 790s. Pitoni was a close contemporary of Fux's (he lived from 1657 until 1743) and dedicated himself to an emulation of Palestrinian counterpoint that far exceeds, in fact, Fux's own cultivation of the so-called »Palestrina style«.

11 See Jen-yen Chen, *Palestrina and the Influence of »Old« Style in Eighteenth-Century Vienna*, in: Journal of Musicological Research 22 (2003), pp. 1–44. Chen shows that it is the idea of authority vested in a (quasi-religious) regard for Palestrina rather than the actual music of Palestrina himself which animates Fux's thought in the *Gradus*.

implicitly sustain the distinction between *antico e moderno* which emerged in Italy at the beginning of the seventeenth century.¹² The *Gradus*, in short, is an Italian treatise in orientation, even if it is also much more than that. Here, too, it is tempting to look again at the Collegium Germanicum, and at the musical culture surrounding Queen Christina of Sweden and Cardinal Ottoboni in late seventeenth-century Rome in order to discover some palpable link between Fux in Vienna and Roman musical thought of a slightly earlier vintage. The *Gradus* is a largely retrospective work: it comes, for a start, when Fux's own career as a composer had substantially decreased (even though there were major works to follow), and it takes its bearing, again and again, from a nostalgia for better days when musical grammar, authority and taste were more suitably aligned. The following, from the preface to the *Gradus*, is a characteristic complaint:

Music has become almost arbitrary and composers refuse to be bound by any rules and principles, detesting the very name of school and law like death itself. I shall not be deterred by the most ardent haters of school, nor by the corruption of the times. I do not believe I can reclaim composers from the unrestrained insanity of their writing to normal standards.¹³

Fux indeed does not do this. Instead, he vests his hopes for the musical future in obedience, the idealised servitude of his student, and the perennial lustre of authority.

We cannot know those composers whom Fux scorned in the *Gradus* because he didn't name them, even if we can guess at those whom he admired through the agency of his own compositions. But the *Gradus* appeals to a specifically Roman and indeed religious concept of musical composition, in which sacred music is not only placed above secular expression, but elevated as the *fons et origo* of all musical discourse worthy of the name. The deeply authoritarian tenor of the *Gradus*, its appeal to a generic, universalizing ›law‹ of musical discourse (symbolised by the achievement of Palestrina and the aesthetic supremacy of modal counterpoint), and its negation of musical individualism in favour of grammatical abstraction speak to an intellectual servitude which might be apostrophised in the motto, *Roma locuta, causa finita est*. As Jen-yen Chen argues, this kind of authoritarianism is expressive of a wider cultural regard for Rome which extends far beyond the domain of the *Gradus* to the very nerve-centre of Habsburg ideology in Vienna. The authority of the Holy Roman Empire, modelled on the eternal city no less than it was derived from the absolutist beliefs licensed by the spiritual authority of the Catholic Church, finds a powerful musical correlative in Fux's treatise. The *Gradus* asks to be compared, as it were, to Fischer von Erlach's *Entwurf einer historischen Architektur*, published in Vienna in 1721, in which the great architectural enterprises of Fischer von Erlach himself are

12 Matthias Lundberg, *What is Really Old in Stile Antico? Ziani, Fux and Caldara at the Habsburg Imperial Court*, unpublished paper delivered at the symposium ›Sacred Music in the Habsburg Empire, 1619–1740 and its Contexts‹, Roosevelt Academy, Middelburg, the Netherlands, 5–8 November 2009.

13 Translation by Alfred Mann in: *Steps to Parnassus: the Study of Counterpoint*, New York 1965, p. 17.

explicitly linked to Roman models (ancient and modern) of power and authority.¹⁴ In either case, Fux or Fischer von Erlach, a gifted practitioner seeks (and finds) in Roman precedents the immutable laws of his own art. What Friedrich Wilhelm Riedel many years ago described as the »Roman-Palestrina« tradition was not so much a detailed transmission of Palestrina's music through Fux's agency but rather more a transmission of the authority (aesthetic, compositional, expressive authority) which Palestrina could symbolise.¹⁵ It is this transmission which gives the *Gradus* its animating impulse. The underlying argument of the *Gradus* is that Fux's own work is firmly rooted in the immutable laws of compositional technique which reach their highest state of perfection in Palestrina. Palestrina himself, however, remains a symbolic presence. It is Fux's own music which we are asked to judge and admire.¹⁶

This self-identification between Fux and Palestrina belies the actual condition of most of Fux's music throughout his long career as a composer in Vienna. Nevertheless, Fux's comparatively rare exercises in a deliberately antiquated idiom (as in unaccompanied modal counterpoint) pressed home the argument made by the *Gradus* itself, with the result that he became known to posterity as the Austrian Palestrina, just as Pitoni (perhaps more justifiably) had been described in similar terms as well. Only two of Fux's c.90 extant settings of the mass ordinary, the *Missa Quadragesimalis* and the *Missa di San Carlo (Missa canonica)*, are wholly in the *stylus antiquus* advanced by Fux in the *Gradus* as the true source of church music. It was the reception history afforded to such works by which Fux earned a one-sided reputation for Palestrinian pastiche in the nineteenth century, whereas the greater number by far of his masses are concertante works in high baroque style. A setting of Psalm 129, »*De profundis clamavi ad te*«, does, however, preserve a notably »Roman« sound characteristic of the ideal perpetrated in the *Gradus* and it may be advanced here as a work which illustrates Fux's abiding commitment to modal counterpoint not only in theory, but in actual compositional practice.¹⁷

14 Fischer von Erlach's achievement closely parallels in significant respects his great musical contemporary: At the outset and close of his career respectively he designed the Dreifaltigkeitskirche and the Karlskirche in Vienna, both buildings intimately associated with Fux's mass settings; his reliance in the *Entwurf* on models from the ancient world and on classical precepts of architecture is also consonant with Fux's appeal to the idea of precedent and authority in the development of musical discourse.

15 See Friedrich Wilhelm Riedel, *J.J. Fux und die römische Palestrina-Tradition*, in: *Die Musikforschung* 14 (1961), pp. 14–22.

16 Fux routinely cites excerpts from his own compositions in the *Gradus* under the guise of the persona he adopts as the teacher (Aloysius) in dialogue with the student (Josephus). The former name clearly denotes Palestrina and the latter Fux himself, but it is Fux's music which is enlisted to provide the aesthetic, expressive and technical illustrations of compositional technique discussed in the text.

17 A performance of the work by the Clemencic Consort is included in a recording of Fux's requiem setting (the »Kaiserrequiem«) on the Arte Nova Classics label (1995), catalogue number 74321 27777 2.

The Roman Complexion of Fux's Compositional Practice

Fux's appointment to the imperial court in 1698 was one of several which Leopold I made in his last years (he died in 1705). Marc' Antonio Ziani, Carlo Agostino Badia and Giovanni (Battista) Bononcini were the principal Italians who, along with Fux, began to introduce elements of late baroque style to Vienna in the closing years of the emperor's reign. It was these composers who redeemed the stagnation of musical practice under the aging Antonio Draghi and his predecessors, to the extent that a virtual reform of the Hofmusikkapelle took place, even if this was never formally acknowledged as such.¹⁸ And a few years after Fux's elevation to the rank of deputy Kapellmeister in 1711, other Italians – notably Francesco Bartolomeo Conti, Giuseppe Porsile and of course Antonio Caldara – confirmed the hegemony of Venice, Naples and Rome in the corporate and complex musical identity forged in Vienna under the rule of Charles VI. But as Hellmut Federhofer has so memorably remarked: »once Italian innovations were adopted [in Viennese church music] *they were retained tenaciously*.«¹⁹ [my italics]

Federhofer imputes to Fux's *Concentus musico-instrumentalis*, a cycle of seven orchestral suites published as the composer's opus 1 in 1701 and dedicated to Leopold's son Joseph as King of the Romans, evidence for a »new and personal style«.²⁰ Notwithstanding the difficulty of dating most of Fux's compositions (excepting the operas and oratorios and certain of the larger liturgical works), there may be good grounds for regarding the *Concentus* as something of a »fresh start«, especially when taken against the background of a possible visit by Fux to Rome in 1700 to study there at the emperor's expense. Our slender evidence for this second Italian visit is a remark in the *Notizie storiche degli Arcadi morti, raccolte dal Crescembini*, published in Rome in 1720 which states that Fux studied there under Bernardo Pasquini.²¹ We know that Georg Muffat had been sent by his Salzburg patron to Rome in the 1680s, where he studied with Pasquini and worked alongside Corelli.²² We also know that Muffat's *Armonico tributo* (1682), a decisive contribution to the early concerto grosso which bears the hallmarks of Corelli's influence, was widely cir-

18 Although the Hofmusikkapelle was normally dissolved and reconstituted following the death of the emperor, these late appointments by Leopold I radically modernised the complexion of music at the imperial court. For details of these changes, see Köchel, *Johann Josef Fux* (see note 3), Appendix 5, pp. 356–375.

19 Hellmut Federhofer, *Austria I:3: The Baroque*, in: The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (see note 1), vol. 1, p. 733.

20 Hellmut Federhofer, *Fux, Johann Joseph*, in: *ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 44. Federhofer contrasts this work with the more old-fashioned elements of late seventeenth century texture and technique to be found in the composer's mass settings before the turn of the century.

21 See Federhofer, *25 Jahre* (see note 5), pp. 159s. The remark occurs in Barlettani-Attavanti's brief biography of Pasquini included in the *Notizie storiche*, vol. 2, p. 330.

22 See Susan Wollenberg, *Muffat, Georg*, in: The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (see note 1), vol. 12, pp. 760–762.

culated in Austria and was an important influence on Fux himself.²³ What cannot be doubted is that after 1701, Fux's instrumental writing increased to the point that he not only regularly produced trio sonatas (many of which were gradual settings for use during High Mass) which clearly reflect the Corellian model, but that his secular and sacred dramatic works, which begin in earnest in 1702 and increase in regularity from 1714, reflect the concerto grosso instrumentation and regularity of forms associated with the oratorio in Rome in the 1690s and early 1700s. Given that Pasquini (along with Stradella, Caldara, Handel and a host of lesser-known figures) was active in the composition of oratorios in Rome during this period, it is not too much to suggest that Fux himself may have modelled his own Viennese oratorios (especially the biblical works) partly on what he knew of Roman and Venetian precedents. Certainly there is a marked change in the style and formal disposition of the Viennese oratorio after 1700 which contrasts sharply with the kind of sacred musical drama written in Vienna before the turn of the century.²⁴

In Fux's case, it is not difficult to identify a strong Italian precedent for his oratorios and even to discern a Roman complexion in their reliance on late baroque texture and technique. A detailed acknowledgement of Roman precedents for the Viennese oratorio in general is obviously beyond the scope of this paper, but I would like to consider, albeit briefly, two short excerpts from Fux's *sepolcro oratorio*, *Il fonte della salute*, first given in Vienna in 1716, to indicate something of the composer's fluent emulation of Italian style.²⁵ Two arias from this oratorio afford an unmistakable impression of Fux's dependence on principles of musical texture and disposi-

23 See Hellmut Federhofer, *Biographische Beiträge zu Georg Muffat und Johann Joseph Fux*, in: *Die Musikforschung* 13 (1960), pp. 130–142. The misattribution of works by Corelli to Fux is also testament to the close absorption of Italian instrumental technique in Fux's orchestral suites, partitas and trio sonatas. See Hans Joachim Marx, *Some Corelli Attributions Assessed*, in: *The Musical Quarterly* 56 (1970), pp. 88–98.

24 Although this change is complex and gradual, its principal features unmistakably reflect the influence of Italian composers and dramatic poets appointed to Vienna by Leopold I, especially in the regularity of musical forms (above all, the dominance of the *da capo* aria) and in the disappearance of structural differences between the indigenous Viennese *sepolcro* and the *oratorio volgare*. See Howard E. Smither, *A History of the Oratorio*, vol. 1: *The Oratorio in the Baroque Era. Italy, Vienna, Paris*, Chapel Hill 1977, pp. 333–361 and 407–416. Smither distinguishes between the conservative scoring of Roman and Venetian oratorios in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and the more colourful orchestration of sacred dramatic music in Vienna after 1700. In particular, the use of wind instruments (notably the chalumeau and trombone) in Fux's oratorios (from 1714 onwards) may reflect the influence of Marc' Antonio Ziani (employed as a composer in Vienna from 1700 until his death in 1715), whose earlier, Venetian operas also feature these instruments in obligato scoring. What cannot be doubted is that the concerto grosso scoring found in the Roman oratorio of the late seventeenth century becomes a firm feature of the Viennese oratorio from 1700 onwards.

25 A modern edition of this oratorio is available in *Johann Joseph Fux, Sämtliche Werke*, Series 4, vol. 5, presented by Martin Jira, Graz 2008. A recording of the work by Martin Haselböck and the Wiener Akademie was issued in 2000 on the CPO label, catalogue number 999680–2. The musical examples transcribed in this paper follow this edition.

tion current in Rome in the 1690s, even if these principles are adulterated by local colouring and instrumentation. The aria »Vedi, che il Redentor« from the *seconda parte* of the work and assigned to La Grazia (soprano) is scored for chalumeau, trombone and continuo. Its adroit ritornello construction, achieved through closely wrought contrapuntal exchanges between the obbligato instruments, reflects a Roman (if not a Venetian) languor, almost a dream-like contemplation of remorse which nevertheless takes its bearings from the Italian trio-sonata of an earlier vintage. The sonorous echoes of pitch and motif thus accumulated when the soprano is added to this texture are especially reminiscent of Corellian practice. Although the instrumental texture is richer in its wind and brass sonorities (chalumeau and trombone) than anything we might expect to find in the contemporary Italian oratorio, the counterpoint, in its statuesque chain of suspensions and resolutions, would appear to derive from Roman practice in the late seventeenth century (see Example 1).

The aria which follows »Vedi, che il Redentor«, »Un destin per me tremendo«, is assigned to Il Demonio (bass) and is scored for strings and continuo. Fux's setting has all the ebullience of an instrumental concerto movement in its clear-cut divisions between robust ritornello segmentation and the florid elaborations of the (vocal) soloist as he confronts his wretched destiny and his inevitable fall into despair and

Aria 33

senza Organo, Violone solo

Example 1: Johann Joseph Fux, *Il fonte della salute*, Aria »Vedi, che il Redentor«

failure. The vocal line, in fact, absorbs the style of Fux's bassoon writing elsewhere to such an extent that we may conclude that the setting is instrumentally rather than vocally conceived, a feature which underlines the relationship between Fux's compositional technique in the arias of his Viennese oratorios and Italian instrumental music almost a generation earlier (see Example 2).²⁶

This kind of music is very far from the Roman ›purity‹ of discourse advanced in the *Gradus ad Parnassum*. But it testifies nevertheless to Roman influence of another kind, and one which moreover confirms that Fux's compositional practice is generally far removed from the modal constraints of neo-renaissance conservatism which

Aria 35

Andante

The musical score is arranged in five systems. The first system contains staves for Violino I, Violino II, Viola, Demonio, and Violoncello/Violone/Organo. The second system continues the instrumental parts. The third system introduces a vocal line (Demonic) with the lyrics "Un de-stin per me tre-men- do,". The fourth system continues the instrumental accompaniment. The fifth system concludes the passage with the vocal line and instrumental accompaniment.

Example 2: Johann Joseph Fux, *Il fonte della salute*, Aria »Un destin per me tremendo«

26 A germane example of Fux's actual bassoon writing can be found in the aria »Se pura più nel core«, assigned to Nicodemo in the oratorio *La deposizione dalla croce di Gesù Cristo, salvator nostro* (1728). For a detailed discussion of Fux's oratorios see Harry White, *The Sepulchro Oratorios of Fux: an Assessment*, in: Johann Joseph Fux and the Music of the Austro-Italian Baroque, ed. id., Aldershot 1992, pp. 164–230.

prevail in the *Gradus* itself. Partly through the agency of his Italian colleagues at the imperial court (above all, perhaps, Ziani), and partly through his own close acquaintance with and study of the instrumental music of Corelli (as in his copies of trio sonatas by Corelli which resulted in their being misattributed to Fux himself),²⁷ Fux reflects an admixture of Roman (Corelli) and Venetian (Ziani) stylistic practice in his own compositions, notably in his secular and sacred dramatic works and in his church sonatas and instrumental sinfonie.

Conclusion

Italian was the currency of intellectual and cultural discourse (notably in painting, architecture, literature and of course music) in the Vienna of Charles VI (that is, between 1711 and 1740). And long before then, the court mediated almost all of its public forms of self-expression (pre-eminently, music and architecture) through the filter of Italian models. After 1683, when the Turks were at the door and were driven away again, the Counter-Reformation zeal of Leopold I and his sons increased to the point that Vienna if anything far exceeded Rome in its political and cultural adherence to absolutism, doctrinaire Roman Catholicism and the so-called *Pietas Austriaca*. In such an environment, it is hardly surprising that Vienna's tenacious cultivation of Italian musical culture was so stringently adapted to a (proverbially) Jesuitical programme of censorship, totalitarianism and (often forced) religious conversion. In particular, the development of the Hofmusikkapelle as the primary agent of this system (in the opera house no less than in church) produced a corporate civil service of musical production perhaps unrivalled in Europe. The subordination of music to the requirements of political and religious servitude in Vienna is precisely what gives meaning to the term ›Austro-Italian‹, at least insofar as we make any claims for the Hofmusikkapelle beyond its being simply an outpost or colony of Italian musical practice.

The greatest adherent to this musical civil service was Fux himself. We may never be able to recover the precise circumstances in which he armed himself (so to speak) with the apparatus of Italian music in late seventeenth-century Rome, or in which he absorbed from Corelli and Pasquini the material expression of concerto and sonata principles of musical organization around 1700, but his own musical works leave us in no doubt that he did so.²⁸ By the time Antonio Caldara arrived

27 See note 23 above.

28 It is possible that the Roman oratorios of Bernardo Pasquini might also provide a source for Fux's compositional technique as this evolved throughout his own sacred-dramatic music from 1714 onwards, but current research does not allow me to pursue this question. Whether or not Fux ever studied with Pasquini in Rome (and the case seems unlikely to be decided one way or the other), my own experience of Fux's music leads me to suggest that his debt to Roman compositional technique (especially in his string writing) was decisive.

in Vienna from Rome (in 1716, the year in which Fux wrote *Il fonte della salute*), the younger composer (Caldara) had to adapt his style to the requirements of the imperial court, in which older Roman models of musical authority were stringently maintained. It was Fux, however, who incorporated the authority of Roman counterpoint (old or new) as the essence of musical expression. »Go to Italy«, he advised a student in old age, »where you will clear your head of superfluous ideas.«²⁹ This was advice which Fux appears somehow to have taken himself.

29 See Köchel, *Johann Josef Fux* (see note 3), p. 263: The original reads: »Gehen Sie nach Italien, damit Ihnen der Kopf von überflüssigen Ideen gereinigt werde.« From an anecdote recounted in old age by Ignaz Holzbauer (1711–1783) and sourced by Köchel to the Viennese journal *Musicalische Korrespondenz* in 1790.