

## **Sonate—Karl Wohlwend, 2020**

### **About the Composer:**

Angiol Michele Bartolotti published two books for guitar: *Libro Primo* (1640), from which these Sonate are taken, and *Secondo Libro* (1655). Though little is known about the details of his life, he writes that he is from Bologna and associated with two of the most interesting figures in all of European history—Jacopo Salviati and Queen Christina of Sweden. Salviati was the Duke of San Giuliano and a descendent of the legendary Medici family. Notably, his wife, Veronica Cibo, ordered the murder of his mistress and placed her severed head in the Duke's dresser drawer. A dedication to the Duke and the Salviati Coat of Arms are seen on the frontispiece of Bartolotti's *Libro Primo*, indicating that Bartolotti may have been under his patronage. Another employee of the Salviati family was none other than Giulio Caccini, whose 1602 publication *Le nuove musiche* hailed the beginning of a new style, known in modern times as "monody," a cornerstone of Baroque music. Bartolotti's *Secondo Libro* is dedicated to Queen Christina of Sweden, who employed him as part of an entourage of Italian musicians at her court in Stockholm. Christina was controversial in her time: regarded as a libertine, dressing in men's clothing, obsessed with the arts and philosophy, never marrying, and abdicating the throne after converting to Catholicism. She led a festive caravan of two hundred fifty-five people across Europe on her way to the Vatican, where she was received in a celebration witnessed by some 6,000 spectators. Bartolotti may have made his way to Paris with Christina when she travelled there to negotiate with Louis XIV in an unsuccessful bid to be made Queen of Naples. He published his instruction for theorbo there in 1669 and he likely remained in Paris for the rest of his life. The books of the French Royal House in 1682 mention "Miquelange, italien" in reference to a body being removed—almost certainly Bartolotti.

### **About the Instrument:**

The five-course, or "Baroque" guitar was commonly referred to as the "chitarra spagnola" or "Spanish guitar" by 17th century Italians. This distinguished it from other types of guitar rather than acknowledged any Spanish cultural connection to the instrument. In the modern age, much of the guitar's image is tied to its use in Spain, and it can be difficult to trace the development of the repertoire from Italian-speaking lands. The instrument used in this recording was built in 2010 in Columbus, Ohio by Chadwick Neal, who modeled it after a French instrument from the Voboam Workshop, ca. 1680. There are four pairs of gut strings, or "courses," and a single high string, (also gut) called the chanterelle. The instrument is tuned analogously to the highest five strings of a modern guitar. There is much confusion and debate about the stringing of this instrument as regards the proper octaves of the bottom two courses. Surprisingly, although there are hundreds of primary sources from the 17th and 18th centuries, very few of them clearly stipulate how the instrument is to be strung. Sometimes clues can be taken from the music itself, region, and date. There is also a great deal of speculation based on ambiguous tuning instructions. Bartolotti leaves no information on this matter in either of his guitar books. Furthermore, when one searches for musical evidence, it is possible to find reasonable justification for any of the three commonly-accepted tuning schemes. I deduce, given the considerations of practicality in finding strings in the 17th century, musicians at that time probably were very much like musicians are now—they worked with what was available to them. Perhaps Bartolotti and other 17th century guitarists experimented with bourdons, or low-octave strings, on either the fourth and/or fifth courses. Perhaps he intentionally avoided precise

instructions because he knew that readers would string to their own resources and instruments. One thing is certain: we do not know and should therefore be cautious when making any assertions about unspecified practices. For this recording, I strung the guitar with a bourdon on the fourth course, and two high strings on the fifth.

### **About this Recording:**

The *Libro Primo di Chitarra Spagnola*, published in Florence in 1640 is a landmark work in the history of the guitar repertoire. The first forty-eight pages consist of the revolutionary *Passacaglie*, a comprehensive work encompassing all major and minor keys. It was arguably the earliest work to undertake this monumental achievement. This current recording presents the remaining works of the seventy-six page tome, including a *Ciaccona*, six suites, and a very unusual setting of the ubiquitous *Follia*. The suites each consist of an allemanda, two correntes, and a sarabanda. The idea of presenting dances in groups arranged by tonality was nothing new. Dance pairs, pavane and galliard, especially, are appear often in the repertory for Renaissance lutes and guitar. Over the course of the 17th century, we can trace the evolution of the standard core model for the Baroque dance suite. This model, typified by J.S. Bach as influenced by French composers he imitated, is the familiar “Prelude - Allemande - Courante - Sarabande – Gigue” format, into which we also find other inserted dances, such as minuets, gavottes, and bourrées. Johann Jakob Froberger is often credited with the influence of this common arrangement; however, this is a rather specious designation. The standard arrangement of dances in his *Libro Secondo* of 1649 was a publisher’s decision, as the manuscripts reflect quite a variety. Perhaps the publisher knew of something that the guitarists had been doing for some time, and restructured the compositions to reflect that framework. Presenting a consistent arrangement of dances, including the sarabande, an import from contact with indigenous peoples in North and South America, was an innovation first seen in guitar publications. Bartolotti’s 1640 publication is arguably the earliest example of several works following a standardized format. This “Allemanda - Corrente – Sarabanda” arrangement was imitated in later Italian guitar publications, notably those of Francesco Corbetta in 1643, and Giovanni Granata in 1646. There are over two hundred sources of music for guitar published in Italy alone during the 17th century, and the guitar’s importance in the development of music that we now refer to as “common practice” has been grossly understated. For most of the past century, many guitarists have ignored much of the instrument's repertory, choosing to believe in a mythology asserting that the guitar was a lowly instrument, in need of a self-styled "savior" to elevate it to a position alongside other instruments on the concert stage. This ignorance, and the hegemony of keyboardists in the world of musicology, perpetrated misrepresentations of the role that guitarist and composers played in the evolution of European classical music. A composer of the highest order, Angiol Michele Bartolotti’s structural conceptions displayed genius and were far-reaching in scope.