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# VIVALDI OR NOT VIVALDI?
## THE UNRELIABLE ATTRIBUTION OF THE SONATA RV 34

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***Izvleček:*** *Odkar je Johann Georg Pisendel prepisal solo sonato v B-duru za violino (ali morda oboo), ki jo je pripisal Antoniu Vivaldiju, in kopijo leta 1717 odnesel nazaj v Dresden, je avtorstvo tega dela veljalo za nesporno. Sonata ima v standardnem katalogu Vivaldijevih del oznako RV 34 in je priljubljeno delo med izvajalci. Posamezne zunanje in notranje značilnosti dela pa nedvomno nakazujejo na to, da je bil njegov pravi avtor v resnici beneški amaterski skladatelj Diogenio Bigaglia (1678–1745). Pisendel je delo najbrž pripisal Vivaldiju na podlagi napačnih podatkov, ki jih je povzel iz neavtografskega vira. V članku so predstavljene nove podrobnosti Bigagliinega življenja in opisane značilnosti njegovega glasbenega sloga.*
***Ključne besede:*** *Antonio Vivaldi, Johann Georg Pisendel, Diogenio Bigaglia, solo sonata, »večnamenska« sonata*

***Abstract:*** *Ever since Johann Georg Pisendel copied, and took back to Dresden in 1717, the solo sonata in B flat for violin (or perhaps oboe) attributed by him to Antonio Vivaldi, the authorship of this work has been uncontested. Designated RV 34 in the standard Vivaldi catalogue, it is a popular piece among performers. But there are persuasive external and internal features establishing almost beyond doubt that its true author was the Venetian amateur composer Diogenio Bigaglia (1678–1745). Pisendel's incorrect attribution may have been an error inherited from a non-autograph source. The article takes the opportunity to add details about Bigaglia's life and describe his musical style.*

***Keywords:*** *Antonio Vivaldi, Johann Georg Pisendel, Diogenio Bigaglia, solo sonata, 'multipurpose' sonata*

### On the Trustworthiness of Attributions

It is normal to accept without too much scrutiny attributions of works to composers that are written in their own hand in their own autograph manuscripts. Cause for further investigation arises only when there is a suspicion that a composer has dishonestly claimed for himself music penned by someone else. The early eighteenth century is in fact full of instances where composers put their own names to music partly (but not wholly) composed by another person and/or which they adapted or elaborated in some way – in either case doubtless persuading their conscience that they had made at least some original contribution to the end-product. Since this article will be dealing partly

with Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741), we can suitably draw a typical example from his catalogue of works. His *Credidi à 5 à Capella* RV Anh. 35b (formerly RV 605), copied out in his own hand, contains the expected attribution to himself in its most familiar, succinct form – "Del Viualdi" – on the title page.[1] This work turns out, however, to be largely a rather straightforward arrangement of an anonymous and probably considerably older five-voice *Lauda Jerusalem* (RV Anh. 35) in his personal archive (but perhaps acquired in the first instance by his violinist father), which he retexted, adding doubling string parts and in places redistributing the material between the voices.[2] But from bar 40 to bar 51 (the single movement runs in its new version to 157 bars) he inserted a quieter, "Andante" episode whose sensitive chromatic harmony shows up the stiff, antiquated counterpoint of the borrowed music. This intercalated section, made necessary by the longer text of the substituted psalm, redeems, up to a point, the silent theft and the claim to sole authorship, lending a degree of plausibility to the notion of "repaying a musical borrowing with interest" so often advanced over the centuries in Handel's defence. It is important to note, however, that no case has yet come to light where Vivaldi deceitfully attributed to himself music entirely by another composer to which he himself had made no significant alteration.

If a composer's autograph can almost in principle be regarded as correctly attributed, the same is normally true for a copy made by a known amanuensis or person sufficiently close to the composer to count as a household member. In Vivaldi's case, such a person existed. He was Giovanni Antonio Mauro (1682–1737), his brother-in-law and a professional music copyist.[3] Between 1713 and the mid-1730s Mauro served as Vivaldi's principal scribe, especially for presentation copies and other copies of calligraphic character.[4] Many of his copies contain supplementary details, corrections of errors or last-minute changes in the composer's hand. This intimacy between composer and copyist, which between 1990 and 2018 misled the entire community of Vivaldi scholars into believing that the copyist in question was not Mauro (whose profession at that time was a mystery), but the composer's own father Giovanni Battista Vivaldi (*c*. 1655–1736), suggests that Mauro came to work in the Vivaldi family home when not carrying out scribal tasks for opera houses or other persons.[5] It is hardly surprising that among the exceedingly numerous

[1] The author would like to thank Colin Timms and Nicholas Lockey for reading and commenting on early drafts of this article. Ryom (RV) numbers, created originally by Peter Ryom and periodically updated with corrections and additions by Federico Maria Sardelli, are presented in their most recent form in Ryom and Sardelli, *Antonio Vivaldi: Thematisch-systematisches Verzeichnis*.

[2] RV 35a, not discussed here, is an earlier, much more straightforward reworking by Vivaldi that retains the *Lauda Jerusalem* text.

[3] On Mauro's life, see especially the very full account in Ambrosiano, "I Mauro e Antonio Vivaldi".

[4] Good examples of presentation copies of collections of compositions by Vivaldi written out by Mauro are his Manchester Violin Sonatas (Manchester, Central Library (GB-Mp), MS 624.1 Vw 81) and his Paris Concertos (Paris, Bibliothèque du Conservatoire (F-Pc), Ac e$^{4}$ 346, A-D).

[5] The first person to give a name to the scribe now known to be Mauro was Karl Heller, who in 1971 called him "Schreiber e" (Heller, *Deutsche Überlieferung*). In Paul Everett's classification system of eighteenth-century Italian hands transmitting Vivaldi compositions the same person became "Scribe (or Hand) 4", and in 1990 a seminal article by Everett on these hands

copies of works attributed to Vivaldi by Mauro – usually in an extended, rather respectful form such as "Del Sig.r D. [for "Don"] Antonio Viualdi" – not one, to my knowledge, has ever had its authenticity questioned.

Slightly – but only slightly – less trustworthy are attributions made by musician colleagues of Vivaldi who were practised in music notation but not themselves professional copyists. Chief among these was the German violin virtuoso Johann Georg Pisendel (1687–1755). Pisendel first came to know of, and copy, Vivaldi's music while still a choirboy in Ansbach.[6] As a young member of the *Hofkapelle* in Dresden, which he entered at the start of 1712, he will have shared in the general enthusiasm all over Germany for the concertos of Vivaldi's collection *L'estro armonico*, Op. 3, which had appeared in 1711. In April 1716 he had a chance to meet his hero in the flesh. Together with a small group of Dresden musicians, he travelled to Venice in the retinue of the visiting electoral prince (*Kurprinz*), the future Friedrich August II (who was also King Augustus III of Poland).[7] The purpose of Pisendel's presence in Italy was threefold: first, he served the prince as a member of his chamber ensemble (*Kammermusik*); second, he participated in the concert and operatic life of Venice as a violinist; third (and most important for the future), he was allowed to treat his visit to Italy as a study tour that in the first part of 1717 took him outside the confines of Venice to such major cities as Bologna, Rome, Naples and Florence. In Venice he took lessons on the violin and in composition from Vivaldi, whose close friend he became; in Rome from Antonio Montanari; in Florence from Martino Bitti. He purchased or was given autograph manuscripts of several composers, including Vivaldi, who inscribed five violin sonatas and six violin concertos to "M[onsieu]r Pisendel".[8] During his stay in Italy, which lasted until September 1717, he also accumulated a vast stock of music procured by more conventional means. Some items were bought from dealers, but most were copied by him, sometimes in extreme haste, with or without facilitation on the part of the respective composers. The nine identified solo sonatas by Vivaldi that Pisendel wrote out, all on Venetian music paper and presumably in Venice itself, and which are today preserved under individual shelfmarks in the Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden (abbreviated as SLUB, with RISM siglum D-Dl), are listed in Table 1.[9] Note that the headings and attributions in the table are transcribed

provisionally concluded, mainly by elimination and at the time in an entirely convincing manner, that he was Vivaldi senior (Everett, "Vivaldi's Italian Copyists", 33–37). Up to the appearance of Ambrosiano's article in 2018, this identification with Giovanni Battista Vivaldi was never challenged, and all those who, like myself, came to regard it as proven must now eat humble pie for the many false assumptions we made.

6 See Talbot, "On the Cusps of Stylistic Change".

7 The fullest and most accurate account of Pisendel's life and music currently available is Köpp, *Johann Georg Pisendel*.

8 Sonatas RV 2, 6, 19, 25 and 29; concertos RV 172, 205, 237, 242, 328 and 340. By styling Pisendel in the French way as "Monsieur", Vivaldi followed standard Italian practice in relation to Germans. The misreading of "M.r" as "M.o" (= "Maestro") is sadly encountered all too often even today.

9 Even when early-eighteenth-century sonatas are not specifically labelled as for violin in their titles, the treble part can be assumed by default to be for – or at the very least, playable by – that instrument. However, this does not exclude the composer's deliberate designing of a violin

diplomatically from the musical manuscripts themselves, not from the matching labels on the cardboard folders provided for the music of the *Hofkapelle* in 1765, not long after the Saxon-Polish court arrived back in Dresden following a period of exile in Warsaw to escape the rigours of the Seven Years' War.

**Table 1**
Copies made by Pisendel of solo sonatas possessing RV numbers

| RV | Key | Heading | Attribution | Shelfmark | Watermark |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | C | Suonata à Violin Solo | del Sig.r Viualdi | Mus. 2389-R-7,3 | W-Dl-102 |
| 5 | c | Suonata à Violino Solo | di Viualdi | Mus. 2389-R-8,2 | W-Dl-104 |
| 10 | D | Suonata 1.ma | del Sig.re Viualdi | Mus. 2389-R-7,1 | W-Dl-102 |
| 12 | d | Suonata à Violino Solo | di Viualdi | Mus. 2389-R-7,2 | W-Dl-104 |
| 15 | d | none | del Sig.re Viualdi | Mus. 2389-R-8,1 | W-Dl-104 |
| 26 | g | Suonata à Solo | del Sig.r Viualdi | Mus. 2389-R-11,1 | W-Dl-102 |
| 34 | B♭ | none | del Sig. Viualdi | Mus. 2389-R-11,2 | W-Dl-395 |
| 759 | B♭ | Sonata a Violino Solo | none | Mus. 2389-R-13 | W-Dl-104 |
| 810 | D | Sonata à Solo | none | Mus. 2389-R-12 | none available |

The inconsistencies of wording in the "Heading" and "Attribution" columns of Table 1 are perhaps the first thing to strike the reader. Not only that: there is no strong correlation between the choice of wording in the two respective columns: the form of the heading rarely predicts the form of the attribution. Moreover, one sonata has no heading, while two others have no attribution. This looseness and lack of fixed habit is, however, typical of a working collection made by a musician for his private use, where memory can sometimes fill in what might otherwise be highly regrettable gaps. The most interesting and revealing column is the last, which gives individual codes for the manuscripts' watermarks as ascertained by the team that worked on the Deutsche Forschungs-Gemeinschaft project "Instrumentalmusik der Dresdner Hofkapelle" between 2008 and 2011. Here, the nine sonatas subdivide into three groups – four having the watermark W-Dl-104, three the watermark W-Dl-102 and a singleton, RV 34, the watermark W-Dl-395.[10]

W-Dl-104 belongs to a paper type widely used by Vivaldi around 1716–1717 and also by Pisendel for his copies of some of Vivaldi's concertos. Significantly, the D-minor violin concerto RV 237 exists in Dresden in an autograph score inscribed by the composer to Pisendel and a complementary set of parts copied out by his pupil, both using this same paper. The obvious inference is that Pisendel made his copies of the four sonatas in question in close proximity to Vivaldi, perhaps at the latter's house and using paper that his mentor and friend supplied. W-Dl-102 belongs to a paper type that Vivaldi used elsewhere on his

sonata *ab initio* as dual-purpose or multi-purpose so as to enable the use of a treble woodwind instrument or even a choice of such instruments.

[10] It must be emphasized that watermarks (beyond the most general descriptions) and paper types had a one-to-one relationship in pre-ruled music paper produced in the Veneto in the eighteenth century. In other words, knowing the watermark instantly defines the paper type, bearing in mind, however, that the same full sheet of paper can be folded and cut in two different ways to produce the visually very dissimilar upright (portrait) and oblong (landscape) quarto formats.

own account, but since it also appears in music by several other composers, conclusions cannot easily be drawn: perhaps Pisendel found it *chez* Vivaldi, or perhaps he obtained it elsewhere. The fact that Vivaldi used the identical paper tends to support the accuracy of the attribution in all seven cases. With W-Dl-395, however, we encounter a watermark and associated paper type that is apparently unique in the whole Dresden collection, implying that RV 34 is in some sense an outlier. In this instance, the paper type lends no support at all to the attribution. A second possible pointer towards apartness, albeit this time a fairly trivial one, appears in the "Attribution" column, where Pisendel is for once content to abbreviate "Signor" to unadorned "Sig.". There is no hint from its ink colour or any other graphological element that this attribution postdates the rest of the manuscript. In parenthesis one might add that RV 28, a sonata in G minor that, like RV 34, seems (albeit more strongly) to have been written with oboe rather than violin in mind, and which survives uniquely in Dresden, likewise sports a "del Sig. Viualdi" attribution. In that instance, however, the scribe is the oboist Johann Christian Richter, who was similarly chosen to serve the Saxon-Polish prince in Venice and in fact was Pisendel's travelling companion on the outward journey to that destination.[11] For RV 28 the correctness of the attribution is hardly in doubt, since it borrows material from RV 27 (Op. 2, no. 1) and is everywhere markedly Vivaldi-like in style. But one could envisage a situation in which RV 28 and RV 34 appeared alongside one another in a collection of solo sonatas by several composers (perhaps all intended for oboe) in circumstances where the wording of the attribution for RV 28, faithfully reproduced by Richter, carried over inadvertently into Pisendel's copy of RV 34 – or even one where RV 34 was already misattributed.

## The Reception of RV 34

Not a single word appears to have been published since Pisendel produced his copy to call into question Vivaldi's authorship of RV 34. Its transmission down to the present day has in all respects been very untroubled. In 1756 Pisendel's heirs sold his collection to the Saxon court.[12] It remained within the royal library until 1896, when this became a public library, of which the SLUB is the linear descendant. Mario Rinaldi omitted it (and Dresden works in general) from his pioneering catalogue of Vivaldi's compositions (1945),[13] but three years later Marc Pincherle listed it under its old shelfmark (Cx 1096) in the special section allocated to sonatas in his thematic catalogue.[14] A modern edition of the sonata edited by Gian Francesco Malipiero appeared in 1962 from Ricordi as a volume in the well-known *Opere strumentali* collected edition;[15] there do not seem to have been any subsequent critical editions.

Critical literature has avoided discussion of the sonata as an individual entity. To be

[11] Information from Rigoli, "Il virtuoso in gabbia", 146–147.
[12] Köpp, *Johann Georg Pisendel*.
[13] Rinaldi, *Catalogo numerico tematico*.
[14] Pincherle, *Antonio Vivaldi et la musique instrumentale*, vol. 2, *Inventaire-thématique*, 5.
[15] Vivaldi, *Sonata in Si ♭ maggiore*. This is Vol. (*Tomo*) 374 of the collected edition.

fair, in its most salient external features the piece appears typical enough for a Vivaldi solo sonata – for example, in its movement configuration slow–fast–slow–fast – not to invite especially close scrutiny. In Cesare Fertonani's compendious study of Vivaldi's instrumental music (1998) it features only in passing, as a representative work.[16] Where RV 34 has aroused discussion – with obvious consequences for performance – is in the matter of instrumentation. Since RV 34 and RV 28 remain within the standard baroque compass for the oboe (c′–d‴) and avoid multiple-stopping or rapid arpeggiation employing wide intervals, a widespread view has arisen that both are in reality oboe sonatas rather than violin sonatas.[17] So uncompromising an antithesis is, in my view, false and unhistorical, as my earlier reference, in note 9, to "dual-purpose" compositions intimates: "both/and" often provides a more appropriate solution to this quandary than "either/or".

## First Steps towards Discovering the True Author of RV 34

The discussion of RV 34 can usefully begin with a set of two-stave incipits for the four movements of the sonata (Music example 1). Incipits do not say all there is to be said about a movement, but in addition to guiding identification they usually contain some of its strongest and most characteristic material and therefore transmit important musical information that can provide some initial leads.

The seeds for the present article were sown a few years ago, when the oboist Alfredo Bernardini was preparing a CD of Venetian oboe concertos by assorted composers, one of whom was Diogenio Bigaglia (1678–1745).[18] As the writer of the booklet notes for this recording, I requested from him photocopies of the manuscript parts for Bigaglia's Oboe Concerto in B flat, which is preserved uniquely in the Fürstenberg (ex-Sonsfeld) collection at Schloss Herdringen in Westphalia (Fü 3697a). Accompanying the parts was a brief handwritten note by Bernardini observing that the second movement of the three-movement concerto, in G minor and scored for solo oboe and basso continuo alone, was a close paraphrase of the third movement of RV 34. Music example 2 gives the opening of the concerto movement, which can be compared with its counterpart in Music example 1.

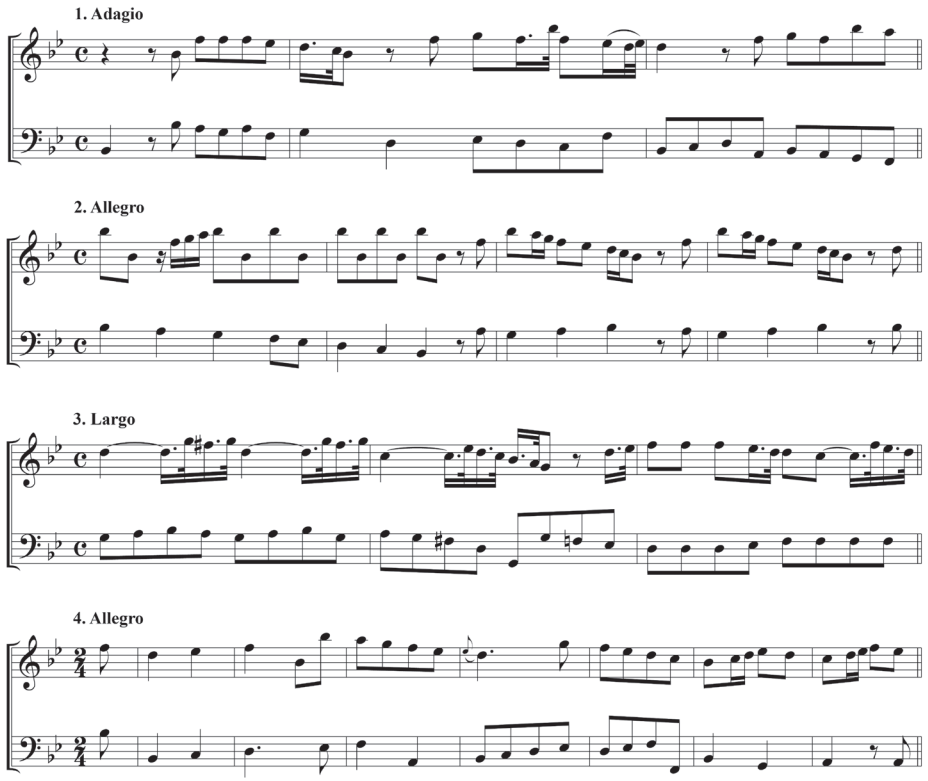
Sadly, I did not follow up the implications of this information there and then, perhaps believing that it was a simple case of near-plagiarism of Vivaldi by Bigaglia, if not sheer coincidence. More recently, however, I took more interest in Bigaglia when I went in search of the parent work for the so-called "Introdutione" RV Anh. 70 (the former RV 144), a very inept orchestral arrangement by an unidentified musician in the Veneto of a violin (and perhaps also traverso) sonata in G major preserved anonymously in the SLUB

[16] Fertonani, *La musica strumentale*.

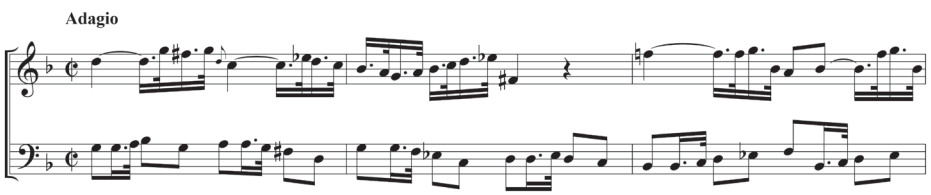
[17] Federico Maria Sardelli has written often about this question: for instance, in the entries for RV 26 and RV 34 in Ryom and Sardelli, *Antonio Vivaldi: Thematisch-systematisches Verzeichnis*, and also in the introduction to his critical edition of RV 810 for Ricordi (2012).

[18] Bigaglia, *Concerti veneziani per oboe* (performed by Alfredo Bernardini with the ensemble Zefiro).

**Music example 1**
Incipits for the four movements of RV 34




**Music example 2**
Opening of the second movement of the Oboe Concerto in B flat by Diogenio Bigaglia




in a copy by Pisendel (headed merely "Sonata à Solo").[19] Further investigation revealed that the G-major sonata had two anonymous companion sonatas, copied in the same hand

[19] D-Dl, Mus. 2456-R-20. This sonata, together with its numerous concordances, is discussed at length in Talbot, "Vivaldi, Bigaglia, Tartini".

and headed similarly: one in C major,[20] the other in G minor.[21] In varied and often quite complex ways each of these sonatas later transmitted some of its material in a more or less literal form to sonatas in Bigaglia's Op. 1, entitled *XII Sonate a violino solo o sia flauto e violoncello o basso continuo*, which Michel-Charles Le Cène published in Amsterdam at the end of 1725.[22] The second movement of the G-major sonata is transposed and adapted to make the equivalent movement in Sonata 3 (in B flat major),[23] while a major-key version of the minor-key opening theme of its third movement opens Sonata 1 (in D major). A modified version of the opening movement of the C-major sonata leads off Sonata 11 in the same key. The complete G-minor sonata, transposed to A minor, is paraphrased to make Sonata 7, the position of the two fast movements being exchanged.[24]

Finally, a different G-minor sonata by Bigaglia, for treble recorder and edited by Hugo Ruf from a privately owned manuscript, reveals itself as an early version of Sonata 4 in Op. 1.[25] Its first movement, the opening of which, in the form published by Le Cène, appears as Music example 3, is a third version of the G-minor movement illustrated in Music examples 1 and 2. A comparison of Music examples 1–3 shows in miniature how Bigaglia, like Vivaldi but more radically, has a habit of recycling favourite material from work to work. Whereas Vivaldi is often content simply to "paste" material borrowed from earlier works with minimal alteration, Bigaglia prefers to recast it thoroughly, making many detailed changes to individual phrases that not infrequently result in their expansion or contraction, or alter their melodic contour. He is also readier than Vivaldi to recycle short fragments taken from older works, weaving them almost invisibly into what are otherwise newly composed movements.

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[20] This sonata has a concordance in Bergamo (I-BGc), that names Bigaglia as the composer. (Bigaglia, Manuscript sonata in C major.)

[21] Respectively, D-Dl, Mus. 2-R-8,36, and D-Dl, Mus. 2-R-8,89. Both sonatas (but not the other one in G major) were identified by Nikolaus Delius some years ago as being by Bigaglia. These three sonatas in Dresden are published together in a critical edition made by the present author for Edition HH (2019).

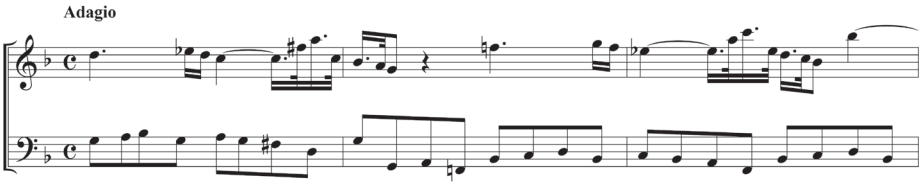
[22] To follow on from the earlier discussion, the wording of the title and the musical content establish that these are conceived *ab initio* as multi-purpose sonatas playable without alteration on violin, on one or both varieties of flute (side-blown and end-blown) and even (although the title does not mention this) on oboe.

[23] It is worth noting that the first movement of Bigaglia's Oboe Concerto in B flat opens with a different variant of the same theme, while its first five notes, in identical rhythm, open a Credo in G major preserved in the library of Warsaw University that at the time of writing is still attributed to Vivaldi (as RV 592), although a second source in the same library (RM 4758) is attributed instead – and certainly more plausibly – to "Pigaglia". This was clearly a favourite opening motive of Bigaglia that, perhaps not coincidentally, also opens a plainsong Credo melody. Finally, a version of the same theme is employed in the first aria of Bigaglia's cantata for alto *Tu sei pur sventurata, o farfalletta*, which is preserved in Naples at the Conservatorio di Musica "San Pietro a Majella" (Cantate 32 bis.07).

[24] There is also a different A-minor version of this sonata customized – almost certainly by the composer – for a "fourth flute" (a descant or perhaps tenor recorder in C). Privately owned, this was published by Schott in 1966/1982 in an edition by Hugo Ruf.

[25] Bigaglia, *Sonate g-Moll*.

**Music example 3**
Opening of Sonata 4 in Bigaglia's *XII Sonate*, Op. 1 (1725); bass figures omitted.




## An Introduction to Diogenio Bigaglia

At this point it will be appropriate to say a few words about Bigaglia, a lamentably undervalued and under-researched composer.[26] As Antonio Bigaglia (or "Bigaja" in Venetian), he was born on 11 March 1678 – thus exactly a week after Vivaldi – into a family of glassmakers on the Venetian island of Murano. He chose – or, more probably, his family chose for him – the religious life, entering the Benedictine (Cassinese) abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore in 1694 and taking the new forename "Diogenio" (which in Venetian sometimes undergoes metathesis to become "Dionisio"). He was ordained in 1700, and in 1713 rose to become Prior, second to the Abbot in the community's hierarchy. He died on 28 or 29 November 1745.

Although the Cassinese branch of the Benedictines was strict in its religious observance, the San Giorgio Maggiore community, perhaps influenced by the high incidence of members of noble families among the monks and also by Venice's well-known tolerance towards the participation of priests in public musical life, was seemingly very accommodating towards Bigaglia's musical inclinations. Accordingly, he became the fourth eminent *dilettante* among the Venetian composers contemporary with Vivaldi, the other three being Tomaso Albinoni (1671–1751), Alessandro Marcello (1673–1747) and his brother Benedetto Marcello (1686–1739). Recorder players, Bigaglia's main champions in modern times, have sometimes assumed that he was a devotee of their instrument. This may indeed be so, but the claim that he was primarily an organist, which first appears in some nineteenth-century accounts, looks more plausible.[27]

Bigaglia's musical output, though not as copious as, say, Albinoni's or Benedetto Marcello's, is reasonably large and diverse. Pride of place goes to chamber cantatas, most of which (numbering around seventy) are continuo-accompanied compositions for single voice, although there is one example of a short two-voice dramatic cantata[28] as well as

[26] The biographical details given here are mostly a condensation of those presented in Talbot, "Vivaldi, Bigaglia, Tartini", which provides full archival and bibliographical references.

[27] Preserved in Dresden (Mus. 2679-U-1), a very Vivaldi-like concerto for violin and obbligato organ by Bigaglia (the attribution in the copied manuscript score garbles the Venetian form of the composer's name to become "Bicajo" instead of "Bigaja") suggests great familiarity with the second instrument.

[28] This is "Rasserena il bel sembiante", a dialogue between the characters Pluto and Proserpine on

a sprinkling of cantatas with full string accompaniment and some chamber duets. Solo sonatas for a treble instrument but including one example for cello, comprise just over half a dozen in manuscript plus the twelve in Op. 1. These usually simple and concise works mostly belong to the earlier part of his career (up to *c*. 1725). His last twenty years see a turn to more elaborate, religiously oriented compositions, which include at least five oratorios and a wealth of sacred vocal music (Masses, psalm settings, solo motets etc.).

Although Bigaglia travelled little outside Venice, and then not necessarily for musical purposes, his compositions, most especially the cantatas, earned great respect throughout Europe. His music is perhaps more strongly influenced by Vivaldi than that of any other Venetian contemporary of the *Prete rosso* except, perhaps, Giovanni Porta, but it also has its individual features. Above all, Bigaglia is less interested in virtuosic display than in solid contrapuntal workmanship, shapely melody and exquisitely rational and economical deployment of his thematic material.[29] When employing binary form, for instance, he takes care, even in shorter movements, to round the structure with a reprise of the movement's opening theme at the point in the second section where the music returns definitively to the tonic and – even more significantly – to match very exactly the endings of the two sections, which are respectively in the dominant (or relative major) and the tonic. He generally stays just on the right side of becoming facile. More than Vivaldi, he has a special liking for "kinetic recurrence" – the rhetorically effective repetition once, twice, or even more times of a short phrase typically introduced in mid-period.[30] He certainly equals and probably outdoes Vivaldi in his cultivation of intermittent and/or ostinato pedals in upper parts: devices that can generate pungent harmonic frictions.[31] But in some respects he is closer to Albinoni than Vivaldi, particularly in his fondness for long, perfectly maintained sequences and for elegantly sculpted melodic lines of obviously vocal inspiration.

## RV 34: The Clinching Evidence in Bigaglia's Favour

The variously paraphrased versions of the G-minor Largo of RV 34 in three sources attributable to Bigaglia, already noted, would probably suffice to convince most musicians and musicologists of his authorship. But there is a striking concordance also for the Allegro second movement of RV 34, of which the opening is closely paraphrased in the equivalent movement of Sonata 6 in Bigaglia's collection (see Music example 4). It is far more credible that fragments from a single earlier sonata by Bigaglia were reutilized in two different sonatas in his Op. 1 – we have already seen a perfect parallel in the G-major

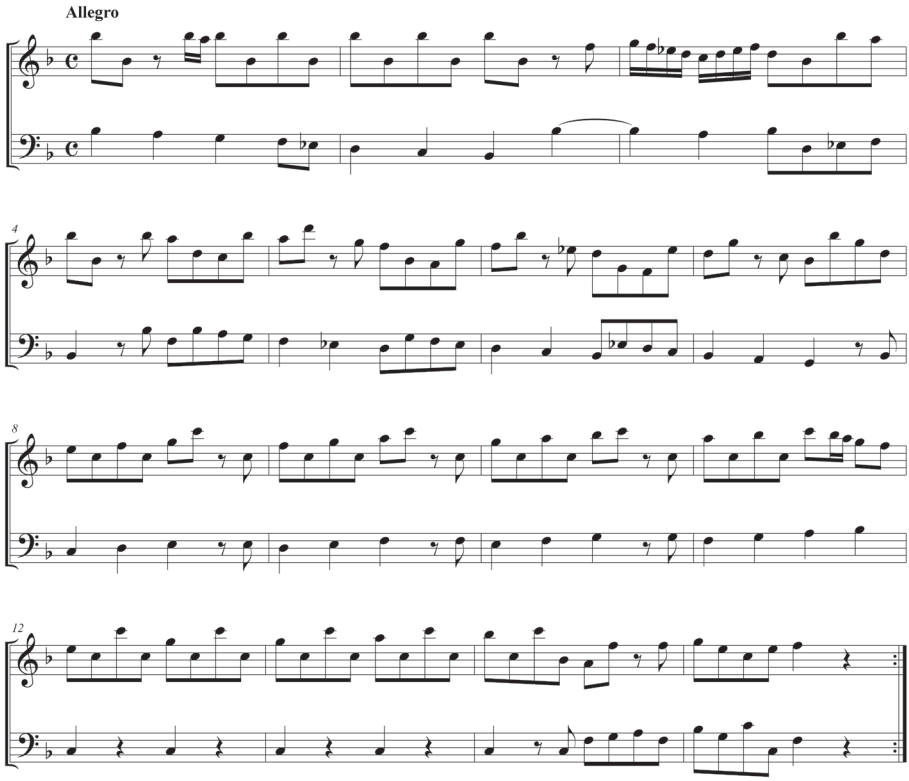
a libretto by Antonio Ottoboni.

[29] Bigaglia was not alone in having these particular priorities: Johann Christoph Pepusch, Georg Philipp Telemann and Jean Bodin de Boismortier are three well-known examples of prolific composers of solo sonatas among his contemporaries who were equally inclined towards them. Not by accident, these were also composers who favoured alternative scorings.

[30] The term "kinetic recurrence" was coined in 1961 by Arthur Hutchings; see Hutchings, *Baroque Concerto*, 43–44.

[31] An intermittent pedal is one intercut with rests or different material; an ostinato pedal is one consisting not of a single note, but of a short group of notes.

**Music example 4**
First section of Sonata 6 in Bigaglia's *XII Sonate*, Op. 1 (1725); bass figures omitted.




sonata – than that Vivaldi plagiarized Bigaglia or the reverse. Moreover, the whole of RV 34 conforms to Bigaglia's stylistic profile, not to Vivaldi's. The section shown in Music example 4 is a veritable pattern book of the devices and characteristics discussed in the last paragraph, exemplifying Bigaglia's use of pedals, ostinato, sequence and kinetic recurrence in combination with a neutral, vocally-derived melodic style that is fundamentally open-ended as regards the choice of treble instrument. Its striking use of rests, often simultaneously in both parts, to create expressive caesuras within an otherwise steady flow of notes is quintessential Bigaglia.

There is, however, a small complicating factor in that Pisendel's copy of RV 34 has a two-flat key signature for the keys of B flat and G minor, whereas Bigaglia himself appears, at least until the late 1720s, to have preferred the older, one-flat key signature for those keys, as evidenced by his Op. 1 and Music examples 2 and 3. It is true that eighteenth-century music copyists generally reproduced just what was before them, "warts and all", but modernizing key signatures was one of the few changes they sometimes made on their own initiative – all the more willingly if, like Pisendel, they were the prospective

performer of the music as well as its scribe. In that light, the choice of key signature is no barrier to accepting Bigaglia as the composer.

## Closing Thoughts

Students of the Ryom catalogue have grown used in recent years to the surprisingly frequent migration of works between the main series, containing authenticated works (with the prefix "RV"), and that of the *Anhang* (with the prefix "RV Anh."), which contains spurious or at least unverified works that at some point in history have borne Vivaldi's name. Understandably, the relegation to the *Anhang* of a long-cherished work supposedly by Vivaldi can cause dismay – and also confusion, for such changes often take a long time to percolate down to musicians and the public. Such changes are of course necessary for the "decluttering" of the Vivaldian canon and the consequent clarification of his artistic profile. In the short run, they can be expected to occur with a frequency not previously encountered as a result of the sophisticated and ever-growing electronic resources on which investigators are today able to draw, among which digitized primary sources are particularly valuable. The SLUB deserves special thanks in this connection for its comprehensive digitization of the manuscripts of the *Hofkapelle*, which has encouraged a more intensive (because rapid) inspection of manuscripts on the premise of "what if …?" than would otherwise have been practicable.

Vivaldi's loss is of course Bigaglia's gain. I have long held the view that not having been discussed by Burney or Hawkins (which was Bigaglia's fate) is the single greatest demotivator of biographical research into the "second tier" of eighteenth-century musicians, while the lack of a biography in turn inhibits the modern revival of their music, creating a kind of adverse feedback loop. As part of the process of attempting to break this vicious circle, the unforeseen assigning to a minor composer of a work long enjoyed under the name of a major composer perhaps has a chance of stimulating curiosity and creating some momentum.

The study of Bigaglia's sonatas also sheds more light on the solo sonata in a particularly interesting, but not yet sufficiently explored, phase of the genre's existence. In the immediately post-Corellian period, from 1700 to around 1730, when the idioms and technical boundaries of the various treble instruments began increasingly to diverge, a certain standardization of structure and style is observable, based on the four-movement layout, the hegemony of binary form (or of an equivalent through-composed form lacking only the sectional repeats), the interchangeability of first and third (as well as second and fourth) movements and the preference for a *passe-partout* instrumental language. This was the golden age of multi-purpose solo sonatas. When the title page of a publication says that the collection is for a choice of instruments, as that of Bigaglia's Op. 1 does, this is less often a liberty taken by the publisher (or resulting from pressure by him) with the mere aim of increasing sales than a deliberate strategy on the composer's part, planned from the outset. It was also a golden age for the pasticcio sonata marrying, within the standard four-movement configuration, movements taken in the carefree spirit of "mix-and-match"

from diverse parent works that were not even necessarily by the same composer.[32] Such marriages were of course encouraged by the structural standardization and relative stylistic uniformity cultivated in the genre during this period, which almost guaranteed a minimum degree of musical coherence.

It will probably never be possible to establish for certain how Pisendel came to place the wrong composer's name at the head of his copy of RV 34. In my view, the most likely explanation is that his copy text lacked an attribution, leaving him to infer the sonata's authorship – incorrectly, as it turned out – from neighbouring pieces. (The other Bigaglia sonatas copied by him, which all lack an attribution, show that he was not unwilling on principle to omit this information, thereby making it likely that he took this group of three from a different source.) The key of RV 34 (B flat major) and the compass of its treble part (d′–c‴) fit the oboe perfectly, and although the piece can perfectly satisfactorily be played also on the violin (or, indeed, the traverso and tenor or descant recorders in C), one can hardly blame modern oboists for claiming it as their own.

When the female protagonist in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* famously utters the line "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet", she is voicing a thought that, in reality, objects become neither better nor worse according to the labels attached to them. The sentiment is optimistic, perhaps unrealistically so. But let us see how RV 34 fares under its new ownership.

[32] We know that Pisendel possessed a manuscript of Vivaldi's violin sonata RV 22 only because each of its two slow movements was used alongside movements by other composers in pasticcio sonatas of this kind preserved in the SLUB. The first movement of RV 22 became the third movement of a pasticcio sonata shelfmarked Mus. 2-R-8,73, while its third movement became the first movement of a similar sonata shelfmarked Mus. 2456-R-21. This example also illustrates the point just made about the interchangeability of position between movements in similar tempo within the standard four-movement layout.

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# VIVALDI ALI NE? NEZANESLJIVO AVTORSTVO SONATE RV 34

## Povzetek

Vse odkar je leta 1716 ali 1717 solo sonato RV 34 prepisal Vivaldijev učenec in prijatelj Johann Georg Pisendel, je ta veljala za delo Antonia Vivaldija. Pisendel je bil član manjše skupine glasbenikov, ki so saškega volilnega kneza Friderika Avgusta spremljali med njegovim daljšim obiskom Benetk, med katerim je nemški violinist izkoristil vsako priložnost za prepisovanje glasbenih del v Benetkah in tudi nekaterih drugih italijanskih mestih. Vivaldi mu je posvetil pet avtografov s solo sonatami za violino in generalni bas, Pisendel pa je poleg tega izdelal kopije nadaljnjih devetih sonat iste vrste, pri čemer je pri vseh, razen pri dveh, na začetku pripisal Vivaldijevo ime. Sonata RV 34 je ena izmed sonat, ki jih je lastnoročno prepisal Pisendel in pripisal Vivaldiju, zdaj pa jih hrani Saška državna in univerzitetna knjižnica v Dresdnu (SLUB). Zelo malo verjetno se zdi, da bi se Pisendel zmotil o njenem avtorstvu (glede na to, da je Vivaldija dobro poznal) ali da bi avtorstvo namenoma napačno pripisal Vivaldiju, da bi tako sonati ohranil mesto med avtentičnimi deli beneškega skladatelja.

Med devetimi sonatami, ki jih je lastnoročno prepisal Pisendel in trenutno veljajo za originalna Vivaldijeva dela, RV 34 izstopa po tem, da je zapisana na vrsti beneškega papirja, ki ga v fondu SLUB ne najdemo nikjer drugje. Že to nakazuje, da izvira iz rokopisa, ki ni nastal v Vivaldijevem krogu, in da je bila najbrž prepisana iz rokopisa, na katerem je bilo skladateljevo ime napačno zapisano ali pa celo izpuščeno, kar je Pisendela napeljalo na to, da je o avtorstvu preprosto ugibal.

Tudi več glasbenih konkordanc in sam slog sonate razkrivajo, da so ti sumi več kot utemeljeni. Njen pravi avtor je Diogenio Bigaglia (1678–1745), nadarjeni beneški amaterski skladatelj in menih v benediktinskem samostanu na otoku San Giorgio Maggiore, rojen na otoku Murano. Pisendel je med drugim prepisal tudi tri Bigagliine solo sonate, ki se prav tako hranijo v Dresdnu, kar kaže, da je imel dostop do del tega skladatelja.

Pri razjasnjevanju tega nenavadnega primera napačno pripisanega avtorstva, ki do zdaj še ni bilo potrjeno, je v članku obravnavanih več pomembnih med seboj povezanih tem: (1) Bigagliino do zdaj skoraj neraziskano življenje, njegova skladateljska dejavnost in osebni glasbeni slog; (2) zgradba in značaj štiristavčne solo sonate v zgodnjem 18. stoletju; (3) instrumentalizacija najvišjega parta v teh sonatah, med katerimi lahko mnoge opredelimo kot »dvo-« ali »večnamenska« dela, saj so bile od vsega začetka zasnovane tako, da jih lahko igra več kot en instrument, ter uporaba kombinacije stavkov iz več kot enega izvornega dela, značilna za pasticcio, na podlagi katere so nastajale nove variante, kar je bila pogosta praksa v tej fazi razvoja solo sonat.