

Adding notes to the left-hand in the performance of late Baroque Italian music for solo keyboard

A small number of keyboard scores of the late Italian Baroque include figures in the bass staff. How can they be performed in a historically informed way? Can we apply this practice to other keyboard pieces from the late Italian Baroque which have no figures but are written in the same style?

These figures are usually applied to left-hand basses which are not essentially contrapuntal or which do not carry thematic material. Its use is not consistent: sometimes the figures are just a reminder of the appropriate harmony one should play or indicate unexpected harmonies which would divert from the *regola dell'ottava*, as in the usual Italian figuring practice; other times they are an abbreviation of the actual musical text. One may find only a few figures or the piece might be figured throughout.

Basso continuo treatises and manuals do not address this practice, probably because their main objective is the accompaniment of singers and other instruments.

In this presentation, I will show selected evidences of this practice from Naples and from the Northeast of Italy, such as pieces by Agostino Tinazzoli (MS D-MÜs, SANT Hs 4166) and Alessandro Scarlatti (MS I-Nc, M.S. 74); I will present examples and possibilities for realization based on related primary sources, such as Benedetto Marcello's Sonata S.717b (MS I-Vnm, Mss.It.IV.960), the anonymous 'Regole per Suonare la Spinetta' (MS I-Vc, CORRER B.43.25), Francesco Modonesi's Sonata in D Major (MS GB-Lbl, Add. MS 31589) and Alessandro Scarlatti's Partite sopra Basso obligato (MS I-Nc, M.S. 74); in order to better understand this practice, I will deconstruct a fragment of the Sonata in Eb Major by Grazio Mei (MS GB-Lbl, Add. MS 31589) in which the left hand is written with chords but can be reduced to a single-voice bass, similar to the other examples; and finally I will suggest their application in repertoire that does not contain figures, as the sonata K. 322 by Domenico Scarlatti.

As this is a practice-based art, or craft, I intend to perform the musical examples live and suggest different ways of realizing the same passages.



Claudio Ribeiro

Royal Conservatoire, The Hague, The Netherlands
c.ribeiro@koncon.nl

Claudio Ribeiro is a sought-after harpsichordist and conductor in a variety of orchestras and ensembles, and a regular guest at the major concert venues and festivals in Europe, recording for labels as Ramée, Ricercar, Ambronay Éditions, ORF, Brilliant and Passacaille. He is also an active harpsichord and early music teacher and combines music making with an intense research activity focused on performance practice and the discovery of unknown baroque repertoire.

Claudio is the co-founder and artistic director of New Collegium and a stable member of other early music ensembles. Claudio holds bachelor's and master's degrees from the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, as well as a bachelor's degree in conducting from the State University of Campinas. Claudio is a member of the teaching staff of the Royal Conservatoire The Hague, and currently taking part in the lectorate "Music, Education & Society", researching the performance practices of eighteenth-century Italian music. www.maestroalcembalo.com

I wish to participate in a facilitated session with respondent.

Audio

Anonymous, Suonata per spinetta divetta (with notes added to the left hand):

<https://open.spotify.com/track/1XqE6XnVHzPU8Tgeulbp4b?si=4dc9010c10dc4661>

Video

Domenico Scarlatti, Sonata K 248:

<https://youtu.be/P2-yiUvXcmw>

Baldassare Galuppi, Andantino from Sonata I (written-out chordal accompaniment):

<https://www.facebook.com/newcollegium/videos/527059751608410>