A Spinettina for the Duchess of Urbino

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The reappearance in our day of a well-preserved Renaissance keyboard instrument, never recorded throughout all the centuries, a beautiful spinettina (Figure 1) with the name of its princely owner and the history of its commission mentioned inside, is a boon for scholars, and to find a jewel like this in a town like New York is a startling adventure for a museum Curator of Musical Instruments.

The soundbox of our spinettina has the shape of an irregular pentagon¹ (Figure 2) (length 140 cm. [55½ in.]; width 47 cm. [18½ in.]; height 16.2 cm. [6½ in.]) with a very short side wall on the left and a long side wall on the right, while the back wall consists of two sections—a long one slanting back away from the keyboard, and the other short one nearly parallel with the front wall. This shape is by no means due to aesthetic—that is, visual—reasons, but strictly determined by functional necessity—that is, in the last end, by the stern, immutable laws of acoustics. Unlike the strings of a modern pianoforte, the strings in this kind of instrument run from left to right, parallel with the front wall, with the bass strings nearest to the player and the treble strings farthest away. In this design, the bass keys obviously can be very short (the shortest natural only 17.5 cm. [6½ in.]) while the treble keys must extend far toward the rear to reach their strings (the longest natural, 44.5 cm. [17½ in.]) (Figure 4). There are fifty strings running over graduated bridges, their vibrating length varying from 11.5 to 119 cm. (4¾ to 46¾ in.).

As usual in Italian keyboard instruments of that time, and unlike Flemish virginals, the keyboard projects from the front wall. The compass is four and a half octaves, C to f³, with a short octave in the bass. The jacks, carrying on their movable tongues quills cut from bird feathers, are relatively short—8.0 cm. (3¾ in.) (Figure 5) and move in rectangular slots which are cut directly in the soundboard itself. The beautifully decorated jack rail prevents the jacks from leaping out of their slots when they are pushed up by the rear end of the keys.

The early history of keyboard instruments is still very obscure and cannot be discussed here. Yet it is certain that in Italy, long before our spinettina, complicated instruments with keyboards were constructed: harpsichords, spinette, and clavichords. Perhaps the most precise depictions made in wood and in life-size are those in intarsias, of which I should like to mention here only the large, beautifully made clavichord

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¹. Sometimes this straight-line pentagon was replaced by a complex spherical contour—for instance, in the spinettina represented in the intarsias by Fra Giovanni da Verona that decorate the doors of the Stanza della Segnatura in the Vatican (Figure 3). I have tried to draw attention to these and other intarsias with musical subjects in my paper “The Importance of Quattrocento Intarsias in the History of Musical Instruments,” read at the Seventh International Congress, Cologne, 1958, reprinted in my recent book, *Musical Instruments and Their Symbolism in Western Art* (London and New York, 1967). The rendering of the spinettina by Fra Giovanni dates from about 1520, about twenty years before our spinettina; it is certainly a portrait of an actual instrument, precisely depicted in the quattrocento technique of geometric projection; on the other hand, it is made to float so beautifully in space that it has an almost surrealistic effect.
FIGURE 1 (OPPOSITE)
Spinettina made in Venice, 1540, for Eleonora, Duchess of Urbino. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 53.6

FIGURE 2 (OPPOSITE, BELOW)
Bird’s-eye view of the Metropolitan’s spinettina

FIGURE 3
Spinettina in one of the doors of the Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican, intarsied by Fra Giovanni da Verona (photo: Musei Vaticani)

FIGURE 4
Layout of the keys
FIGURE 5
Jacks seen from the side, the front, and the rear

FIGURE 6
Clavichord detail from the intarsias in the studiolo of Federigo da Montefeltro in Urbino

depicted in the studiolo of the main residence of Federigo da Montefeltro in Urbino (Figure 6). This clavichord has no less than forty-seven keys. The intarsias were made by a master not yet identified, in the early 1470s, that is, about seventy years before our spinettina. The proportions, the mechanism, and the beauty of instruments like these justify the assumption that such keyboard instruments must have already had a considerable history before the date of this intarsia.

So much for the shape of our instrument as it was determined by its function and by traditions of workmanship. We now proceed to its decorative features and feel justified in describing them in detail, since the ornamentation makes this one of the most refined and exquisite Renaissance instruments extant, and probably one of the finest ever made.

The decoration is carefully planned and is executed in different media: intarsia, painting, certosina work, carving, and so on, each applied to a different and precisely limited area. The only large region where the wood is left bare is, of course, the soundboard. Any
inlay or carving there would have interfered with its vibration.\textsuperscript{*} The soundboard is made of Italian cypress. The fifty keys are made of oak wood, the thirty naturals with ivory facings, the twenty sharps with ebony facings. The fronts, as usual at the time, are arcaded (Figure 7).

2. Only Flemish keyboard instruments, especially the virginals of the Ruckers tradition, have their soundboards decorated, but with nothing more substantial than painted flowers.

This spinettina is not showy and extravagantly ostentatious as is the one by Annibale Rossi, made in Milan in 1577 and preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum (no. 809-1869) (Figure 8), which is studded with precious stones, large ivory plaques, and lapis lazuli panels, while ours is in the refined and dignified taste prevailing in the preceding generation, a work of art made by a master craftsman for connoisseurs.
The inside walls of the soundbox above the soundboard are divided by engaged consoles into squares of identical decoration with geometrical designs based on rhomboids (Figure 9).

The jack rail is made of gum wood with inlaid strips of walnut and ebony and with eight decorative buttons of black and white segments in ivory and ebony.

The soundhole rose (Figure 10), that place par excellence for exquisite ornamentation, is made of several layers of parchment in flamboyant Gothic tracery and framed by several parchment rings.

The front wall above the keyboard is divided into nine squares of alternating decoration (Figure 11); four of the squares have a simple geometric design
executed in inlay of mother-of-pearl (see Figure 7). The remaining five squares show exquisite stars done in Gothic tracery (Figures 12, 13). The corner stars are of identical design, and so are the two stars nearest to the middle one. Each of these stars has five studs, one in the center and the others in the four corners.

As mentioned before, the keyboard in all Italian spinettine, harpsichords, and clavichords projects from the front of the case instead of receding, as is the rule in Flemish virginals. This design leaves two large rectangles, left and right of the keyboard (Figures 14, 15). Both are decorated in “real” intarsia, meaning an inlay composed of different woods of various colors, instead of the cheaper mock intarsia, in which the whole area is of one single piece of wood made to resemble a real inlay of contrasting color sections—achieved by running slight grooves meant to simulate the glue joints of the supposed sections, which are then colored differently. Both panels have similar patterns, the right one (Figure 14) tending more toward plant forms. Both patterns are designed in double symmetry: left-right as well as top-bottom; they emanate from dolphins arranged in pairs in the center. These dolphins, stemming from Lombard candelabra designs, are arranged differently in each of the two intarsia panels. In the left panel (Figure 15), each dolphin—there are actually four because of the mirror reflection—has ribbons sprouting from its tail and its snout. A little more complicated is the center design in Figure 14. Each quarter of the whole intarsia design has two interconnecting dolphins—one dark and one light—resulting in eight dolphins because of symmetrical reflection. Each dolphin sprouts ribbons; moreover, each white dolphin’s tongue, terminating in a spiral, connects another spiral, which is nothing less than the upcurving snout of the neighboring dark dolphin.

Both intarsias employ a methodic graduation from dark to light, represented by maple, gum, pearwood, poplar, mahogany, and ebony.

The interlacing design of the ornaments is clearly in the Lombard-Venetian tradition. One finds similar patterns in the work of intarsiatori who had studied in Venice. I should like to mention here only two examples: some of the ornamental intarsia panels in the altar bench in the apse of the church of San Domenico in Bologna, made by Giovanni da Verona in Santa Maria in Organo in the 1520s and by Fra Damiano da Bergamo (Figure 16) in the 1540s. Both of these artists had been apprentices of Fra Sebastiano da Rovigo in Venice. Also very close to our patterns are some of the designs (Figures 17-19) by the North Italian Master F., tentatively identified by Rudolf Berliner² as Domenico da Sera, called il Franciosino.

The keyboard is protected, left and right, by projecting walls (Figures 20, 21). Their outsides show spiral tendrils painted in gold on blue ground, recalling Venetian enamel patterns on metal (see Figure 21). On top of these walls are carvings analogous to the armrests in early cinquecento choir stalls, which are to be found, for instance, in Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo, in the cathedral of Pisa, and in Santa Maria in Organo in Verona. The inside and outside of these

³ Ornamentale Vorlageblätter (Leipzig, 1925) pp. 84–85.
FIGURES 14, 15
Intarsia panels on the right and left of the keyboard

FIGURE 16
Detail of the intarsia panels in an altar bench in the church of San Domenico, Bologna (photo: Villani & Figli)

FIGURES 17–19 (OPPOSITE, ABOVE)
Ornamental patterns attributed to Domenico da Sera, called il Franciosino. From Rudolf Berliner, Ornamentale Vorlageblätter (Leipzig, 1925) pls. 84, 85

FIGURES 20, 21 (OPPOSITE)
Carved walls protecting the left and right ends of the keyboard
carved walls show leaves and fruit in relief. Perched on them is a snake intertwining its tail with that of a dolphin, the body of which is covered by fin-like leaves. Riding on the snout of the dolphin is a goat-footed female winged monster.

Characteristic of the decoration are the numerous little ivory studs scattered all over the instrument, or rather—more precisely—attached to the upper rim of the case, to the corners of the decorative panels on the inside of the case, and to the center section of the front wall.

Viewing the different decorative patterns employed in this instrument stemming from vocabularies as different and distant as Gothic, arabesque, certosina, and Venetian textile design, one must admire the skill by which they are all absorbed and incorporated into one pleasing homogeneous scheme of decoration, which by itself strikes the eye as typical middle cinquecento by virtue of its neat, symmetrical arrangement of rectangular compartments.

Not the least effective part of the decoration is the motto painted in large, gold letters on blue ground over the keyboard (see Figures 7, 11):

Ricco son d’oro—et riccho son di suono,
Non mi sonar si tu non ha del buono.
(Rich am I in gold and rich in sound,
Play me not, if no good tune is found.)

Left and right of the motto, the place and date of manufacturing are painted: Venetiis—MDXL.

The impatient fingers of the connoisseur will want to slide up and remove the front board to gain direct access to the rear of the keys and the inside of the soundbox. However, the front board does not move, being firmly glued to the soundbox. It is the wooden strip carrying the motto that turns out to be removable—it is attached to the instrument by three small movable pegs. Its back harbors a surprise. There is a long inscription in ink, in Italian chancery of the time: “Ordinata e Fatta per Sua Eccelenza la Sig.:a Duchessa D’Urbino L’anno di Nostra Salute 1540 e pagata. 250 Scudi Romani.” (“Commissioned by and made for Her Excellency, the [Lady] Duchess of Urbino in the year of our Redemption 1540 and paid for with 250 Roman scudi.”) (Figure 22).

This is more information than we usually glean from old keyboard instruments, but unfortunately the name of the maker is not mentioned. This is an exceptionally beautiful instrument, and the price mentioned was a large one at the time of manufacture. As we know, Venice had a substantial number of good instrument makers at the time, but there is no instrument extant that would give us a clue or a basis for comparing shape and decoration.4

Knowing the place and date of manufacture, and even the name of the person who ordered it, invites us to place the instrument into its historic environment, the cultural life of the time, the musical tradition, and the role it may have played among the interests of its owner, Eleonora the Duchess of Urbino.

She was born in 1493 in Mantua, one of the leading towns in music and the arts, the first child of Francesco Gonzaga, the ruler of Mantua, and the celebrated Isabella d’Este, one of the most attractive, as well as gifted, women of the age.

Eleonora’s early years at the glamorous court of Mantua must have been rich in cultural impressions, but her life was not a happy one. Her relations with her mother were never very warm, perhaps because—as we know from letters—her mother had hoped to please her husband with a boy. When she was in her sixth year, the political power game began to affect her life. The queen of France offered to take her there for education. This offer, repeated in later years but al-

4. My search for the maker—unsuccessful up to now—was the reason for postponing the publication of a monograph on this instrument. A hypothesis pointing toward the Venetian workshop of the famous Lorenzo Gusnasco da Pavia will be mentioned later.
ways refused, was only one of many political devices to tie Mantua to the political aspirations of France in Italy. To use children as hostages to guarantee reliable political attitudes on the part of their parents was not uncommon in Renaissance politics. In Eleonora’s eleventh year, 1505, after long negotiations, she was betrothed to the three-years-older Francesco Maria della Rovere— the nephew of Pope Julius II—who was destined to become Duke of Urbino after the death of Guidobaldo da Montefeltro. The betrothal was celebrated by a magnificent ceremony of merely official character in Rome in the absence of the betrothed couple, since they were too young for the consummation of marriage.

In 1508, after the sudden death of the last Montefeltro, Francesco Maria della Rovere became Duke of Urbino and visited Mantua to meet his future bride for the first time. The actual wedding took place in the following year in Urbino. The departure of Eleonora from her paternal home was not without strain: the court was in financial straits, but Eleonora, independent and adamant far beyond her age, insisted successfully on immediate cash payment of her dowry. Eleonora was only fifteen years old then, and the brutality of the marriage customs of the time appears sadly in letters of a court secretary, which report an early morning visit of the duke’s mother to the bridal chamber to inquire into the bride’s emotional reaction to the wedding night.

Her marriage was beset with tragic events. The power struggle in Italy between the Holy See, France, and Venice threatened the independence of Urbino. Leo X decided to capture it. In advance, Isabella d’Este traveled to Rome to intervene with the Pope, but in 1516 Urbino fell to the papal army. Eleonora and her little son, Guidobaldo, took refuge in Mantua. In 1517 Francesco Maria recaptured Urbino but had soon to give it up again and reconquered it only in 1522 during the interregnum after the death of Leo X.

Meanwhile, Eleonora lived an unhappy existence, penniless at her father’s court in Mantua. Moreover, she was gravely ill, suffering from a lingering disease, which she had acquired from her husband. Her eyesight was seriously threatened, forcing her to withdraw gradually into religious seclusion. In 1538 Francesco Maria suddenly died and Eleonora’s mother died the following year. Ill and in retirement, Eleonora lived until 1549, surviving her great mother by only ten years.

Two portraits of Eleonora have survived. The first, by Lorenzo Costa, painted in 1508, now in the collection of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, shows the lovely face of a young woman with a meditative expression and unhappy eyes† (Figure 23). The date of the

5. There is some close resemblance to her features in the left of the two allegorical figures sitting in the foreground of the allegorical painting which Lorenzo Costa made in 1506 for the studiolo of Isabella d’Este and which—without convincing reasons—is usually called The Court of Muses of Isabella d’Este. It would certainly seem quite possible that Costa would have introduced Isabella’s daughter into this scene, which no doubt must have been discussed with Isabella. Georg Gronau, in “Frauenbildnisse des Mantuaner Hofes von Lorenzo Costa,” Pantheon 1 (1928) p. 241, goes so far as to consider both female figures in the foreground as transfigured portraits (erklaerte Abbilder) of Eleonora and Isabella.

FIGURE 23
Portrait of Eleonora d’Este, attributed to Lorenzo Costa, 1508. English Royal Collection. Crown copyright

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picture can be precisely established by a letter of October 1, 1508, of Eleonora’s father to Lorenzo Costa, in which he said, “Se havete finito il ritratto di Leonora nostra figlia mandatecelo fora, perché lo volemo vedere.” The second, painted by Titian in 1538 (Figure 24), now in the Uffizi, shows her similarly withdrawn, with an introverted expression. The mouth has acquired a somewhat hard and disappointed look. She was forty-five years old at the time—this was two years before our instrument was built.

It is in her last sad period that she must have commissioned our spinettina, and we may safely assume that music was her great consolation through these years and brought back many memories of feasts and concerts in Mantua and Urbino.

The girlhood years of Eleonora at the court of the Gonzagas in Mantua must have been extraordinarily rich in musical impressions and stimuli. The Mantuan court was famous for its musical life. A great number of celebrated composers and performers were employed there or visited there—for instance, Josquin, A. Agricola, Bartolommeo Tromboncino, the virtuoso on the trombone, and the famous singer and composer Marchetto Cara, to mention only a few. Many famous musical spectacles, such as rappresentazioni and intermedii, were performed there—for instance, the “Fabula d’Orfeo” by Polizian, in which the favorite pupil of Leonardo da Vinci, Atalante Migliorotti, played a leading role in 1490 reciting “sulla lira,” that is, the lira da braccio, that exquisite seven-string fiddle taught to Atalante by Leonardo.

Eleonora’s mother, the marchesa, was herself a passionate and well-trained musician, an expert singer, and a performer on the lute and various keyboard instruments such as the clavichord, the spinettina, and the organetto. Of her taste in commissioning beautiful instruments for herself, we will speak later. She studied lute with several masters—first with Girolamo Sextula from Ferrara, and later with the celebrated Giovanni Angelo Testagrossa. She was familiar with the many dances of the time, some of them quite complicated, and we know from contemporary records that she saw to it that her little four-year-old daughter received instruction in the saltarello and other dances. Her rooms in the ducal palace, whose soul she was, and their decoration speak of music. The intarsias in her famous studiolo include representations of beautiful musical instruments—for instance, a lira da braccio, guitar, and various wind instruments. The “grotta” beneath it, a small room serving to house her collections—and certainly also some of her exquisite musical instruments—showed in its ceiling decoration a musical motto: a symbolic combination of notes and pauses and four musical clefs, all on a five-line staff.

This was the environment in which little Eleonora grew up to her sixteenth year, and one can well imagine the early musical experiences that she retained in her memory during her later life in Urbino and Venice.

In Urbino also, music was held in high regard at the court as well as in the church. The great Federigo da Montefeltro (1422–1482) had been a musical con-

9. Ibid.
noisseur and had employed a considerable number of distinguished performers, vocal as well as instrumental, whose names have come down to us. Of his special taste, an interesting record can be found in Vespasiano da Bisticci “... dilettavasi più d’instrumenti sottili che grossi... ma organi e instrumenti sottili li piacevano assai.” (“He was fond of soft instruments rather than loud ones, but organs and small instruments gave him great pleasure.”) Leonardo da Vinci must have been familiar with the many beautiful representations of instrumenti sottili among the inlaid walls and doors in the ducal palace of Urbino, especially in the studiolo there, including the lute, the lira da braccio, and the precisely delineated clavichord (see Figure 6), the earliest representation in such detail and with such precision of this kind of keyboard instrument with forty-seven keys.

This intense musical tradition was still very much alive when Eleonora came to Urbino in 1509, and we know that just in that year Francesco Maria called to the Urbino court the famous lutenist Giovanni Maria da Crema, nicknamed Gianmaria Giudeo, another fact attesting to the predilection for strumenti sottili.

The third musical city that plays a role in the history of the owner of our spinettina is Venice. This is not the place to sing the glory of Venetian musical culture in the cinquecento, but a few hints as to the eminence of musical instruments may be appropriate. The surviving musical scores, sacred as well as secular, and the wealth of artistic representations of music, musical scenes, and musical instruments in paintings, prints, and sculpture eloquently testify to the rich instrumental life of the time. A great variety of beautiful instruments appear in the hands of angels in the foregrounds of the sacre conversazioni painted by Giovanni Bellini, Carpaccio, Montagna, Cima da Conegliano, and others and later in paintings by Titian and Paolo Veronese. There we find an abundance of lutes, citterns, viols, lira da braccio, harps, psalteries, shawms, cornornes, transverse flutes, recorders, cornets, trumpets, and trombones, to mention only the more fashionable ones. In addition, several kinds of keyboard instruments were used, apart from the organs: clavichords (often called manicordi or monocordi), and instruments with quill action called arpicordi, clavicimbani, and spinette. The city government encouraged outstanding instrument makers such as Bastiano da Verona, Guido Trasuntino, and Lorenzo da Pavia. Significantly, legal protection existed for inventors of new kinds of musical instruments.

Specialized private collections of musical instruments existed very early in Venice. One generation after Eleonora saw no less than four such treasuries (studii di musica), as mentioned in Francesco Sansovino’s Venezia Descritta (1581): the studi (music chambers) of the Cavaliere Sanudo; of Catarino Zeno, whose collection included a precious organ previously owned by King Mathias Corvinus of Hungary; of Luigi Balbi; and that of Agostino Amadi, containing “non pure strumenti alla moderna ma alla Greca et al’ antica,” that is, archeological reconstructions which had become so fashionable with the rise of musical humanism in the late quattrocento.

The name of one of the celebrated Venetian instrument makers mentioned above, Lorenzo da Pavia, must have often been heard by Eleonora during her girlhood at the ducal palace of Mantua. Lorenzo, whose family name was Gusnasco, played an important role in more than one respect in the artistic activities of Eleonora’s mother, Isabella.

Gusnasco attracted attention when he still lived in


11. Organs here do not mean church organs, but most likely the small portable organs that are often depicted in the hands of angels, or chamber organs such as those represented in the beautiful intarsias of the studiolo of Federigo da Montefeltro in Gubbio, now preserved at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. (See Emanuel Winternitz, Musical Instruments and Their Symbolism in Western Art (pl. 47A).


14. There are at least four makers of keyboard instruments known with the name Trasuntino, probably all related, covering the span from 1530 to the end of the century. Of Alessandro Trasuntino, called Alessandro degli organi, it is known that he commissioned a portrait from Titian in 1540, the date of our spinettina, and paid the painter by making a musical instrument for him. Alessandro Trasuntino is also mentioned in the letters of Areino.
Pavia as an outstanding maker of instruments, especially of lutes, viols, clavichords, and organetti. He was a master in the art of intarsia, especially in ebony and ivory. We mention Gusnasco because there exists a great wealth of revealing documents concerning his service to the great Lombard courts, and especially to Isabella d’Este.\(^{15}\) Whether Isabella ever met Lorenzo in person is not known, but the rich correspondence that is preserved furnishes a great number of interesting musical details. The correspondence began in the 1490s. Among other things, a lute was commissioned with a soundhole rose of ebony and ivory, “perché lebano e lavelio sono doe bele compagnie insieme” (“because ebony and ivory make beautiful companions”).

In July of 1497, Isabella requests a lute “adapted to my voice,” but Lorenzo regrets not being able to oblige her because he cannot find ebony black and beautiful enough. He adds, in his somewhat stilted and subservient style, that he was very disconsolate since he had wanted badly to make that lute, that he was certain that he would have made the most beautiful object in Italy or anywhere, and that he had been most anxious to please the only person who would have understood the value of those objects—a fact which would have prompted him to produce something excellent.

In 1495, Isabella reminds him of a beautiful clavichord he had made for her sister, Beatrice, Duchess of Milan, and wants one of equal beauty for herself, adding, however, the special wish: “We want only to request that it should be played easily [that is, with light touch], for we have such a light hand that we cannot play well if we have to strain our hand because of the resistance of the keys. Please understand our wish and what we need: make it in the same shape as you are accustomed. The faster you serve us, the more we will be pleased.” Isabella was kept informed of the progress of the work. Incidentally, after Beatrice’s death in Milan, Isabella managed to acquire her clavichord also.

Lorenzo da Pavia spent his last years in Venice, and not only continued there the manufacture of beautiful instruments, but also became the trusted and shrewd agent of Isabella for procuring works of art for her collection, especially curiosities, antiquities, gems, cameos, small bronzes, and paintings.

A letter of Gusnasco to Isabella in April 1515, preserved in the Gonzaga archives, reports the shipping of musical instruments to the marchesa, especially “di liuti, viole, corone, buccettine, teste di morto ed altri soggetti di ebano e di avorio, oltre un bellissimo gravicembalo.”\(^{16}\) We do not know whether these instruments were made by Gusnasco or only procured for the marchesa. In any case, it is significant that keyboard instruments were ordered from Venice. “Gravicembalo” does not mean a heavy or especially large harpsichord. The word is rather equivalent, according to the usage of the time, to “clavicembalo,” that is, harpsichord.

The date of Gusnasco’s death is not known. The most interesting treatise by Carlo Dell’Acqua: Lorenzo Gusnasco e i Lingiardi da Pavia (extract from Perseveranza [Milan, 1886]), which is based on profound familiarity with the Mantuan court archives, suggests 1517 as the year of death; other writers some years later. At any rate, Gusnasco must have died a few years before our spinettina was built in Venice, but we may not be too far from the truth if we associate the workmanship revealed by our spinettina—above all, the combination of ebony and ivory with other precious woods and the exquisite marquetry—with the Gusnasco tradition.

So much about the shape, decoration, history, and provenience of our instrument. Musical connoisseurs and historians of music will ask how it sounds and inquire whether the claim made by the motto painted on the front board, “Rich am I in sound,” is really true. The spinettina is in perfect playing condition and has a crisp, silvery, and—considering its modest dimensions—surprisingly clear and loud tone. Yet such an assertion, like all verbalizations of tonal qualities, is insufficient. We hope that in the near future, at one of the demonstrations in the galleries of musical instruments, our spinettina will appear as one of the protagonists, emitting the voice that must have charmed, four hundred years ago, its listeners in Venice and Urbino.


\(^{16}\) Quoted in Antonio Bertolotti, Artisti in relazione coi Gonzaga Signori di Mantova (Modena, 1885) p. 108.