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A four-stave transcription of Froberger's Ricercar, FbWV 412: Why play contrapuntal music from open score notation?

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This, the 400th anniversary of Froberger's birth, has found me experimenting with my own open score editions of his contrapuntal music and, thanks to your welcoming editor, you will find a sample transcription inserted within this issue: Froberger's Ricercar, FbWV 412.

The great advantage of open score notation (*partitura*) is that it conveys a much clearer impression of the contrapuntal structure and, to my mind, it is a superior format for the study, practice and performance of these polyphonic masterpieces than the usual two-stave reduction. One can, of course, consult Froberger's original manuscript, his *Libro Quarto* (1656), online at www.onb.ac.at, in beautiful colour digital images. There, in addition to the composer's clear and definite hand, one can enjoy the extraordinary illustrations by Froberger's childhood friend, Joannes Sautter: patterns of embellishment to challenge and inspire modern day practices of ornamentation! The *Libro Quarto* is a presentation copy, however, and contains many frequent and awkward page turns. These can be easily avoided in modern type setting. Froberger's use of soprano, alto and tenor C-clefs for the upper three parts — a standard seventeenth-century practice — can be a trial for the less experienced reader and I offer here a transcription which uses only the treble and bass clefs familiar to the majority of potential users. Nonetheless a version using the original clefs can be downloaded from my website at http://www.charlston.co.uk/free_sheet_music_downloads.htm

It's a sad fact that Froberger's contrapuntal music seems to be little known or played today. A discussion of this neglect and the riches awaiting the intrepid performer can be found in my forthcoming article 'Searching Fantasy: Froberger's Fantasias and Ricercars Four Centuries On' in the *Journal of the Royal College of Organists*, Volume 9, December 2016. Readers who get bitten by the score reading bug might also like to know that Armelin Musica publish two separate editions of Frescobaldi's *Fiori Musicali* in *partitura*: one edited by Christopher Stembridge using modern clefs and the other by Giovanni Braulin in

the original clefs. Donald Francis Tovey's 1931 open score edition of *The Art of Fugue* follows the original clefs and contains indications of his useful decisions for the distribution of the middle voices between the hands.

The musical detail of FbWV 412 is endlessly fascinating. For example, note

- the unusual key (F-sharp minor), its ambiguous modality with frequent alternations of the pitches G-sharp and G-natural, and the consequent notation of the Neapolitan chord in the middle of bar 40 (C-natural for B-sharp)
- the use of two types of sharp symbol: the usual sharp sign (a double cross, ♯) to indicate a sharpened pitch within the prevailing tonality and the rarely seen single cross (×) used as a sharp sign when the resulting raised pitches A-sharp and E-sharp, lie outside the expected tonal norms: i.e. the enharmonic equivalents (B-flat and F-natural in modern thinking) pose a serious challenge for quarter-comma mean-tone temperament (but not for equal temperament which was proposed as a keyboard temperament by Frescobaldi and Mersenne in the 1630s)
- the gradual evolution of the opening subject from its initial triad (bars 1–21) which gradually transforms to a tetrachord in the third section (32–41), via the second section (22–31) whose melody became a stock in trade of the high Baroque fugue (compare, for example, J.S. Bach's Well-tempered Clavier Book II, fugue no. 14, also in F-sharp minor)
- the cumulative excitement produced by the reduced note values and *stretti* in the final section.

Try playing this fugue at the same tactus throughout, say, minim equals 50–52 beats per minute, for the outer sections and in the tripla, dotted semibreve equals 75–78 beats per minute or perhaps, as Frescobaldi suggests, a little quicker.

Ricercar F#BWV 412

Transcription in open score with modern clefs

Source: *Libro Quarto* (1656), *Seconda Parte*, Ricercar [VI]
A-Wn Mus. Hs. 18707, fols. 53v-56v.

Johann Jacob Froberger (1616-1667)



System 1: Four staves (two treble, two bass) in common time. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The music begins with a whole rest in the first staff, followed by a series of notes in the second staff, and then continues across the bass staves.



System 2: Four staves (two treble, two bass) in common time. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The music continues from the previous system, with various rhythmic patterns and accidentals.



System 3: Four staves (two treble, two bass) in common time. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The music continues with more complex rhythmic and melodic lines.

* indicates that in the original, raised pitch is indicated by a single cross, 'x', not a sharp symbol. All other sharps are noted as they occur in the autograph and apply only for the duration of the note, not for the length of the bar as in modern practice.



System 4: Four staves (two treble, two bass) in 3/4 time. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The music changes to a 3/4 time signature and continues with similar rhythmic and melodic patterns.

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** in the original the sharp symbol has been corrected to a cross, 'x'.

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