

The Public Persona and Mental World of a Seventeenth-Century Composer

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September 29, 2015

This paper treats plagiarism as performance and Angelo Berardi as a virtuoso. Berardi [1636-94], an active composer and musician, is remembered for his half-dozen music treatises. Through the discovery of lost and unknown writings by Berardi and his mentor, Marco Scacchi, I show him to have been a career plagiarist. Yet the fine details of individual thefts are of slight interest. Taken together, however, they complicate 'information' drawn from musicological 'sources.' Moreover, they show how musicians crafted and projected personæ in response to epistemological and social disadvantages: theory outranked practice and theorists outranked practitioners. In style, technique, and content Berardi is representative of author-composers. They presented themselves as gentleman rather than musicians, adopted the style and tone of Italian academies, and favored speculative matters (musical science, antiquarianism, friendship, combinatorics) over practical ones. They demonstrated a marked penchant for quadrivial theorizing and symbolic language that scholars now routinely disregard such as 'irrelevant.' On the contrary, I argue that these writings reveal most precisely at their most irrelevant and derivative: a mental world quite at odds with our interest in its musical artifacts."