

68. Ricercar del sesto tuono (Madrigali e Ricercari a quattro voci, 1589)

Andrea Gabrieli
(1510-1586)
arr. William Melton

Gabrieli, Andrea

(probably born between 1510 and 1533 in Venice; died 30 August 1585 in Venice)

As the uncertainty about his year of birth indicates, little is known about Andrea Gabrieli's early life. Still, the great fame of Gabrieli's nephew Giovanni should not be allowed to obscure the considerable accomplishments of the uncle, the first internationally prominent member of the Venetian School. He was possibly a chorister at the great cathedral of San Marco, where he may have studied with the eminent Flemish composer Adrian Willaert. His early professional life may have included posts in Cannaregio and Verona, and he definitely travelled to Bavaria in 1562, where he met and befriended Orlando di Lasso. On Gabrieli's return to Venice in 1566, he was employed as organist at San Marco, where his reputation grew. He was a fine teacher, as his best pupils Giovanni Gabrieli and Hans Leo Hassler attested. He was also a prolific composer of both sacred and secular vocal music and in instrumental genres, much of which was conceived for performance in the spacious, resonant acoustic of San Marco.

Many of these compositions were first published by Giovanni after his uncle's death, one such being the 'Ricercar del sesto tuono', part of the collection *Madrigali e Ricercari a quattro voci* (Venice, 1589). The designation was a nod to the older, more formally rigorous ricercar, but in reality the piece was a contemporary Venetian *canzon da sonare*. Though the work lends itself to brass sonorities, the original gives no specifics as to instrumentation.

Text by William Melton