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"compiacimento di purgattissimo conoscimento" - Performing Gesualdo in Mid-Seventeenth Century Rome

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The title of the presentation contains two elements: a citation (referring, of course, to Carlo Gesualdo, the then and today praised madrigal composer) and a statement worth discussing, namely that Gesualdo's music was not only known and studied in the 17th century, but that his music was also still performed (at least at a certain time and place). Roman documents from the middle of the 17th century illustrate interesting aspects of performance practice of Gesualdo's madrigals, especially concerning his notorious use of many accidentals, which I call 'vieltönig' (using verbatim 'many pitches') and which is more fully investigated in a recent publication (Martin Kirnbauer, Vieltönige Musik - Spielarten chromatischer und enharmonischer Musik in Rom in der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts, Basel 2013). Based on this I would like to argue that especially Gesualdo's madrigals formed the core of a distinguished repertory, which lead to later so-called 'madrigali al tavolino'.

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