

Hashirim Asher Li'Shlomo
Music, Faith, and Friendship in the Venice Ghetto
–1622/1623–
A Historic Collaboration between
Salomone Rossi, Leone da Modena, and Sarra Copio Sulam

In 1622, the Mantuan composer **Salomone Rossi** (ca.1570 - ca.1630) arrived in Venice at a decisive moment in his career. Already celebrated at the Gonzaga court in Mantua, he came not only to supervise printing but also to prepare the publication of an unprecedented work: a collection of polyphonic settings in Hebrew, later issued in 1623 as *Hashirim Asher Li'Shlomo* (*Songs of Solomon*). In Venice, Rossi entered a Jewish intellectual world shaped by two of the most significant figures in seventeenth-century Italian Jewish culture: the polymathic **Rabbi Leone da Modena** (1571 - 1648) and the intellectual poet **Sarra Copio Sulam** (ca.1600 - 1641). Their literary, religious, and musical ambitions helped create the conditions in which this collection of songs could emerge.

Their encounter was more than a biographical coincidence. Through their shared efforts, Rossi, Modena, and Sulam produced a work of lasting importance while using art to affirm their faith and community in a time of personal tragedy and social pressure. Their meeting in Venice represented a unique moment of cultural synergy, in which the boundaries between sacred tradition and *Renaissance* innovation became fluid, giving rise to the first printed collection of Hebrew polyphonic music. Rossi's *Songs of Solomon* thus stands not only as a foundational achievement in the history of Jewish music, but also as the product of a rare convergence between composer, rabbi, and poet within the early modern ghetto.

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