

VLADIMIRO VAGNETTI  
*Knowledge or emulation?*  
*Considerations on the importance of the*  
*“unwritten” in the interpretation of early music*

This article is a personal reflection on the importance of study of the primary and secondary sources for a choral director, and in general, for the performer who wishes to approach the historic repertoires. In the first part I will deal with the importance of research as the point of departure for the construction of an informed interpretation. In the second, I will give some examples of how, through perusing secondary historic sources, we can not only understand early practice, but also propose original readings of medieval and Renaissance music.

*Part one: The steps of the sages*

A *haiku* poem of Matsu Basho (1644-1694) reads: «Do not seek to follow the footprints of the wise. Seek, rather, what they sought». The footprints are that which remains of a route, giving precious indications such as the direction followed, the number of persons who have passed that way, and so on, but to understand the aim of the voyage we must raise our eyes from the ground and observe the landscape. The traces left by the early musicians are the primary sources, the notated music. Having acquired a minimal knowledge of the notation, and the fundamentals of early music theory, the musician of today who takes in hand an historical source needs only liberate himself from the comforting visual aspect of a score, and begin to

sing with his own voice, letting himself be guided by hearing, and following a rhythmic flux that, no longer limited by bar lines, will immediately be involved in continual play of proportion, suspensions, hemiola, and temporary passages of *tactus* from one rhythmic level to another, compatible with the initial sign of *tempus*.<sup>1</sup> To learn how to do this it is sufficient to practice – it is not so difficult – but is it sufficient for an understanding of early music? The reading of music in the form in which it has been conceived is fundamental: it obliges us to put aside our convictions and frees us from the superstructures that have become embedded over centuries of evolution of musical thought, aesthetic and grammar, so that we can begin to think like the early performers. «Writing is not music, but for centuries it has been the only road through which we have approached music».<sup>2</sup> writes M. H. Schmid, but then he adds that «music lives within sound, so visual phenomena are irrelevant». Written music represents the mirror of the idea of the composer, enclosing within itself the incredible generating force which has made possible the amazing architecture of sound which characterises western classical music. The notation allows the performer access to the musical work, which thus becomes *performable*. But when we speak of early music, access to the notation itself is not sufficient to bring the work to life, because the original early source, in its essentials, does not offer all the performance practices of the time (see, for example, the alterations of *musica ficta*) and not even modern transcriptions, notwithstanding the richness of notation and indications which they contain, allow the revelation of all the “unwritten” elements of early music.

Composers of polyphonic music before 1600 sketched and realised their compositions in score, using as their means methods of notation which could be cancelled, such as the “slate for composing music” cited in the testament of Francesco Corteccia,<sup>3</sup> but once having finished the compo-

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1 RUTH DEFORD, *Tactus, Mensuration, and Rhythm in Renaissance Music*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015.

2 MANFRED HERMANN SCHMID, *La notazione musicale*, Roma, Casa Editrice Astrolabio, 2018, p. 12.

3 JESSIE ANN OWENS, *Composers at work. The Craft of Musical Composition 1450-1600*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 205.

sition, they separated the voices into partbooks. There was no longer any need to show visually something which was made to be heard; it was the skill of singers and instrumentalists, with their profound knowledge of the performance practice and the theoretical sources of the time which reconstructed the sounds proposed by the composer, and make them resound in the places for which they were conceived, and the circumstances for which they were composed. To reach an understanding of the musical practices of the past it is thus necessary that the modern interpreter, once having become familiar with the theoretical sources and the notation of the time, also undertakes research in its context, and the function for which it was intended.

Barthold Kuijken, baroque flautist, director and scholar of world fame, has published in an essay his thoughts on the performance of early music with the title «The notation is not the music».<sup>4</sup> The first chapters of the volume are dedicated to the importance of that which is “unwritten” in early sources. At the conclusion of the second chapter, in which the author talks of his relation with research, he writes:

As a result of my research I considered the notation to be mainly a kind of roadmap, an *aide-mémoire* and help for invention, enabling the informed reader to create an inner image of the music. Quite naturally, this image is not definitive, but will change with time, mood, circumstance and knowledge. Once this provisional image has been formed, in great detail, I can let it take an audible shape. In other words, I have to begin to play (or practice!) with the result clearly in my heart and mind. From this total concept, quasi- retrospectively and in constant interaction with the actual reading and playing, I shape my interpretation and determine all its performance parameters. In this sense, “early” music does not exist: the performance becomes a re-creation, the music is born at this very moment, “the ink is still wet”.<sup>5</sup>

I wish to extrapolate two fundamental concepts from this passage: that

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4 BARTHOLD KUIJKEN, *The Notation is not the music, Reflexions on Early Music Practice and Performance*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2013.

5 KUIJKEN, *The Notation is not the music* cit., p. 11.

of the “continual evolution of the interior image of the music” for the performer, and that of the “retrospective process”, a kind of eternal circle in which the second element conditions the first; the backward glance advances knowledge. Jerome S. Bruner<sup>6</sup> and Gregory Bateson,<sup>7</sup> in their respective studies, also speak of the “circular” dynamics which lead to an understanding of the ambience in which we live, and the construction of our knowledge. The former an American psychologist and anthropologist, the latter an English psychologist and sociologist, both scholars have investigated the ties between mental, social and cultural processes, analysing the mechanisms through which man constructs his meaning and his Self, thus giving sense to the world and his life, and constructing his own identity. Bruner comes to the conclusion that the construction of the Self comes about through a relationship between the circularity of mind and culture: culture is a product of the mind and at the same times contributes to its formation. Applying these concepts to the study of early music, it becomes evident that the construction of the identity of an interpreter cannot be separated from his confrontation with research, something which is not so very difficult in this day and age, given the quantity and quality of musicological research published today, and of easy access.

He who occupies himself with early music must sooner or later inevitably experience the “circularity” of dynamics and understanding. As an example, and in the form of personal anecdote, I cite one of my own experiences. During a conference in which was analysed an eighteenth

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6 For a greater understanding of Jerome S. Bruner’s writings I suggest reading his following two essays: *La ricerca del significato. Per una psicologia culturale*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 1992 e *La mente a più dimensioni*, Bari, Laterza, 2005.

7 Gregory Bateson’s ideas can be approached by reading his works *Mente e natura. Un’unità necessaria*, Milano, Adelphi 1979, and *Verso un’ecologia della mente*, Milano, Adelphi 1988. His concept of circularity is well expressed by Laura Arcangeli, in her chapter dedicated to Bateson in *Il silenzio come possibilità per una didattica speciale*, Perugia, Morlacchi Editore, 2009, p. 19. «Ideas are all that we can know: there is isomorphism between the mental processes, which is to say that our mind is structured and functions like nature, and for this reason can understand it. In a circular system, that which happens at any point of the system has effects which, undergoing a complete circle, can determine changes in its point of departure. A characteristic of circularity is the continual change of the single parts through reciprocal adaptation».

century copy of Allegri's *Miserere*, held today in the Biblioteca Dominicini of the Cathedral of Perugia, I heard a scholar who, referring to the great many dynamic signs written by the copyist, judged them summarily with the adjective 'absurd' (a term repeated after a hearing of the *midi* file of the transcription ... sigh!). Having been intruiged by the matter, I went to the library in the following days to see with my own eyes "such horrendous things", and in fact, I was stupified by the fact that almost every note had its own dynamic, indicated with meticulous precision. Under the longer notes one also read more than one sign: *p f p, p f, f p*. But the combination of two or three had created relations with a reading which I had undertaken some time previously. A chapter of the monograph by the German oboe player Gustave Vogt<sup>8</sup> deals with his transcriptions for oboe<sup>9</sup> (1860 ca.) (ca. 1860) of vocalisations composed at the beginning of the century by the castrato Girolamo Crescentini.<sup>10</sup> The oboist had substituted the dynamics in full eighteenth century style given by the singer (*messe di voce* in all values above a minimum and dynamics of crescendo/diminuendo in groups of two sounds (Fig. 1) with signs of crescendo and diminuendo for entire phrases and thus more consonant with the expressive ideals of Romanticism.

Crescentini, in fact, was famous for the infinity of nuances of his phrasing; the writer Stendhal was fascinated by him, and wrote that it would be impossible to describe all the effects produced by the singer. The same singer illustrates his technique. He does so by using modern *forcelle* ("hairpins") of *crescendo* and *diminuendo* to demonstrate that which he calls "reinforcing": that is to say, the emission of voice in long notes and the appoggiaturas which emphasise the first of a group of two notes (Fig. 2).

The mystery is explained. If instead of suddenly passing from one level of sound to another (as does a computer) we connect the dynamics of the

8 GEOFFREY BURGESS, "The premier oboist of Europe": a portrait of Gustave Vogt, Lanham MD, Scarecrow Press, 2003.

9 GUSTAVE VOGT, *Vocalises de Crescentini transcrites pour Hautbois*, Paris, Richault et C.ie Editeurs, [1860 ca.].

10 GIROLAMO CRESCENTINI, *Vingt-cinq nouvelles vocalises ou Études de l'Art du Chant*, Paris, Chez Mr. de Garaudé, 1818-1823.

30      *Sempre legato.*

N<sup>o</sup> 8.  
Allegro  
Vivace.

Fig. 1 - GIROLAMO CRESCENTINI, *Vingt-cinq nouvelles vocalises* (1818-1823), Beginning of vocalise n. 8

*Miserere* of Perugia with the hairpin dynamic signs (*p f p* corresponds to *crescendo* and *diminuendo* of the voice emission), the melodies become coloured by a multitude of nuances; Crescentini's "rinforzi" are evident. All that flowering of dynamic indications (which must have taken the copyist a great deal of his energy) derives from the reign of the absurd, in an effort to search for the eighteenth century aesthetic made up of continual dynamic change.

Does it make any sense to propose a performance of the famed *Miserere* taking into account all those dynamics? Why did the scribe feel obliged to annotate hundreds of dynamics in the score? It is thus that, departing from a superficial judgement, I enriched my knowledge by generating new

1<sup>tes</sup> BEISPIEL.

Gefang, die Biegbarkeit der Stimme zu erlangen, mit Beziehung, wie die Stärke auf jeder Note, und insbesondere auf jeder kleine Note oder Appogiaturen anzuwenden ist.

EXEMPLE 1<sup>er</sup>

Chant propre à acquérir la flexibilité de la voix, avec indication de la force à employer pour chaque note, et pour chaque note d'appui ou APPOGIATURE.



2<sup>tes</sup> BEISPIEL.

Derfelbe Gefang, wie der vorhergehende, nur in der Schreibart verschieden, die kleine Noten sind durch wirkliche Noten ausgedrückt, welche ebenfalls gezeichnet sind das Rinzorando zuzulassen.

EXEMPLE 2<sup>me</sup>

Même chant que le précédent différemment orthographié, en ce que les APPOGIATURES y sont exprimées en notes réelles, lesquelles sont également susceptibles de RINFORZANDO.



Fig. 2 - GIROLAMO CRESCENTINI, *Vingt-cinq nouvelles vocalises* (1818-1823), Introduction

questions... and the desire to give them an answer. Most probably the scribe has tried to make visible to the eye something that he had heard (perhaps in Rome, during Holy Week), which the singers of the Cathedral of Perugia could not have understand by reading a normal score, which at that time contained few indications of dynamics.

So what has changed since that time? Do modern transcriptions ma-

nage to contain all the necessary information for the performance of early music? Undoubtedly, the choice of a good edition is fundamental. The best are those which are furnished with historical and biographical notes which help place the work within its time and within the production of its composer. Another indication of quality is the presence of a detailed critical commentary which explains the criteria of transcription and eventual modifications made to the original source.

### *Part Two. Study of the sources to avoid emulation*

The greatest risk lying in wait for the performer who does not follow the road of research is that brought about by emulation (and I think we can truly say that we live in the age of emulation): that is, to follow in an uncritical manner well-known interpreters of the time, attributing to them mythical qualities, or particular charisma, whether they be considered pedagogical authorities, or those who have attained particular artistic success, attributing to them a role (often transient) as the source of “truth”. The continual evolution of interpretive styles demonstrates with what velocity that which seems illuminating today can be surpassed tomorrow. Let us take as an example Peter Phillips, with the Tallis Scholars, and Paul Hillier, with the Hilliard Ensemble: two indisputable myths regarding the performance of Renaissance polyphony, and models of reference for a great many directors and interpreters, but which diverge regarding a number of important musical matters:<sup>11</sup>

- The choral organic: the Tallis Scholars have around ten singers, while the Hilliard are soloists;
- The register of performance: the Tallis Scholars generally transpose upwards, while the Hilliard do not transpose
- The pronunciation of texts: the Tallis Scholars pay little attention to

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11 See *There Is No Such Thing as a Norm: Paul Hillier on Renaissance Sacred Music*, in BERNARD D. SHERMAN, *Inside early music: conversations with performers*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 100-116.



regional pronunciations of Latin, while the Hilliard takes them into consideration

- The use of *musica ficta*: the Hilliard apply unwritten alterations with a certain liberality, the Tallis are more cautious.
- The presence of a director: the Tallis Scholars are directed in concert, the Hilliard no.

Where is the historic truth? Which choices are the most reliable? Why do two groups of great success have such opposing views? A performer who is well prepared can make personal and original choices, taking his example from the great interpreters (limiting himself to simple emulation), but above all endeavouring to find confirmation in the historical sources to be able to make informed choices.

Let us speak of sonority, for example: a topic which is very complex for choral directors. The sonorous nature of a piece will depend on many factors: the vocality of the singers, the number and kind of vocal ranges, the instruments which may accompany or double the voices, the height of register, the resonance of the context in which the work is performed, and so on. How can we ever know if the early music we perform today sounds as it did when conceived?

Here is Nikolas Harnoncourt's opinion:

We know almost nothing with certainty of the sound of music prior to 1500. Anyone interested in this music must always keep this fact in mind and use extreme caution in assessing statements made by those alleging that they are in possession of incontrovertible evidence. Everything achieved up to the present in this area is hypothetical in nature, and will remain so forever because this music in its true form has died away once and for all. The only option open to us is to try to imagine, as precisely as possible, the way in which music was made at that time using eye-witness accounts and contemporary documentation. Nor should we forget that the musical practice of that time, above all in secular works, almost always utilised improvisation that was more or less bound by a specific set of rules. *The greater our comprehension of the entire spiritual and intellectual milieu of those times, the more performance of this music will communicate towards us.* But, since complete un-

derstanding is unobtainable, the “Music of the Gothic age” will never again be heard in a completely authentic way – we would have to become the people who lived during that period to realize a full understanding. We are only able to approach its true form through intuition and knowledge; the closer we come, the more convincing the results will be. It is almost impossible to discuss sonority in a structured and comprehensible way. Musical sound is a phenomenon that eludes any attempt to describe it. [...] There are simply no linguistic means to describe it. We must make do with visual or other comparisons, such as bright and dark, open and muffled [it should be sufficient to think of the images evoked by Banchieri<sup>12</sup> to indicate the incorrect vocality of singers, Fig. 3]. However, these expressions themselves are by no means unambiguous... Why are we interested in questions of musical sound? What is the nature of the interrelationships between a composition and its tonal reproduction? Are there binding rules which mandate the selection of certain sound combinations in performance, especially the performance of early music?<sup>13</sup>

As we can see, Harnoncourt’s reflections also conclude with questions, but amongst these, those regarding the kind of organic to apply seems particularly pressing. Once we accept the obvious fact that «the music is

146

VTILI ET CIVILI DOCUMENTI  
A GLI STUDIOSI CANTORI.

**Q** Vatro voci differenti ricercansi al perfetto Conterto Musicale, & queste sono Soprana, Alta, Conista, & Bassa, il Cantore che possiede l'vna di queste, in tre conditioni la possiede, cioè voce di testa, voce di petto, & voce obusa; quello che dalla natura vien dotato della prima, è Cantore perfettissimo; quel che ha voce di petto è Cantore perfetto; & chi tiene in se voce obusa, è Cantore imperfetto, & prima voce di testa intendesi quella, che in Soprano, loza incomodo aggiunge ad vna distaza di dodici voci, similment: le altre tre parti come qui.

Soprana. Alta. Conista. & Bassa.

Voce di petto intendesi quella che giunge alla distaza di dieci voci, & volendo procedere più su non può & rende nota in vederlo & sentirlo, chi possiede vna di queste diui voci (che si faoue & bene organizzata) è dono particular di Dio; della terza voce obusa, dirèmo sia quella, che in soprano sembra vna Gattina, in Contralto vn Cucho, in Tenore vn Asino, & nel Basso vn Bue, deue l'huomo conoiser se stesso, & chi ha voce cattua in càntando, più tosto vien detto diftoso, che virtuoso, & in luogo di diletare, rende tedio a chi l'ascolta; & quare siate scorte che in ridotti il diftoso per ambizione, leua parte di mano al virtuoso fementi in vero eipresia, quando non fosse necessitato per mancanza di voce buona, che in tal caso per non guastar la compagnia, con modestia reuoluir: deue il Cantore star mortificato, nel libro sempre tener l'occhio, numerare le pause attentamente, & piano, & cio per non interrompere il compagno, entrare dopo le pause con grazia, non far sforzimenti di vita, occhio & bocca, non cantare nel naso, pigliar fiato con garbo, ne mai pigliarlo sopra le note apuntate, per non priuare il Concerto d'armonia; fuggire la vanagloria, ambizione, & inuidia; nelle conuersationi non essere insolente ne buffone, ma si bene modesto & arguto; & sopra il tutto essere bun composto d'animo, accio non gl'interuenga, come interuenne a certi Cantori che ascoltauo Dio, & mentre cantauano, egli rideua, interrogato la causa: di tal riso, rispose. Coloro cantano si, con la bocca, ma dentro sono mal composti d'animo.

VTILI

Fig. 3 - See the images evoked by Adriano Banchieri, *La Cartella Musicale*, Venezia, Giacomo Vincenti, 1615: «in Soprano sembra una gattina, in Contralto un cucho, in Tenore un asino e nel Basso un bue».

12 ADRIANO BANCHIERI, *La Cartella Musicale*, Venezia, Giacomo Vincenti, 1615.

13 NIKOLAUS HARNONCOURT, *The Musical Dialogue: Thoughts on Monteverdi, Bach and Mozart*, Cleckheaton, The Amadeus Press, 1997.

there for us to use»,<sup>14</sup> and therefore nothing prevents us from performing it according to our means, I will furnish some examples of how it is precisely the historic sources which answer these questions, showing a great range of possible combination of voices and instruments.

### *The sacred polyphony of William Byrd: choral or solo performance?*

As we all know, the composer Byrd was Catholic, but in the service of the Anglican court. The researches of Joseph Kerman<sup>15</sup> have produced evidence of the fact that the *Gradualia* of Byrd were performed during secret Catholic rites. A restricted and reserved number of people participated in these rites. It is plausible that the

The image shows a page of a musical score for a motet by William Byrd. At the top, it is labeled 's. voc.' (single voice) and 'L. SUPERIVS.' (Liber Primus, Superius part). The score begins with a large, ornate initial 'S' for the word 'Suscepimus'. The lyrics are in Latin and are written below the musical notation. The music is in a single staff with a treble clef and a common time signature (C). The lyrics are: 'Vice pinus Deus, i. j. miseri- cordi- am tu- am, in medi o templi tu i; secundu nomen tuum, i. j. De- us, secundu nomen tuum, De- us, I ta et laus tu a, i. j. in fines ter- ra; in fines ter- ra, lu sti ti a, Iusti ti a, plena est dexte ra tu a. est dextera tu a.'

Fig. 4 - WILLIAM BYRD, *Suscepimus Deus* in *Gradualia, ac cantiones sacrae. Liber Primus* (1605), Motet, *Superius part*

singers who performed the liturgical music were few in number and this hypothesis is reinforced by the musical characteristics of the *gradualia*. The elaborate movement of the single parts, characteristic of Byrd's compositions, allows us to think that they were performed by solo voices, or

<sup>14</sup> "Non esiste una vera regola" cit., p. 124.

<sup>15</sup> JOSEPH KERMAN, *William Byrd and Elizabethan Catholicism*, in *Write All These Down*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994.

in any case a small number of performers. (Fig. 4).

The voices of his compositions written for Anglican rites are much more linear: the Anglican choirs were more numerous, being similar in quantity to those of the English cathedrals of today.

### *The polychoral works of De Victoria*



Fig. 5 - BARTOLOMÉ MOREL, *Medallones de los ministriles e de los cantores del facistol de la catedral de Sevilla (1565)*<sup>16</sup>

Fig. 6 – *Cathedral of Burgos, intarsio on a choir stall showing minstrels who are reading from a choirbook (sec. XV)*



16 KREITNER, *Minstrels in Spanish Churches* cit., p. 535 (public domain pictures available at: <http://www2.ual.es/ideimand/portfolio-items/medallon-de-los-ministriles-del-facistol-de-la-catedral-de-sevilla-por-bartolome-morel/> e <http://www2.ual.es/ideimand/portfolio-items/medallon-de-los-cantores-del-facistol-de-la-catedral-de-sevilla-por-bartolome-morel-1565/>).

Thomas Luis de Victoria was a pioneer and innovator of the Roman School in the field of polychoral composition. The Spanish composer has left us precise indications regarding the practice of doubling voices, or performing them with instruments.<sup>17</sup> In his collection of polychoral compositions of 1600 we find organ parts which reinforce choir I. In a letter of 1601 to the *Capitolo* of the Cathedral of Jaén, the novelty of this editorial choice is emphasised, and suggests the possibility of performing choir I with a single voice, the other three parts being played by the organ. The same letters defines the compositions for three choirs «para voces, organo y ministriles», underlying thus the possibility of doubling the voices with instruments, or even substituting one of the choirs with instruments. The stable presence of groups of wind instruments within the chapels is amply documented in Spain until 1600<sup>18</sup> and beyond (Fig. 5 e 6).

Here is the complete text of Victoria's letter:

Madrid, 10-II-1601. Tomás L. de Victoria ofrece unos libros de música al Cabildo.

Muy Ilustres Señores. Yo he hecho ymprimir esos Libros de Misas, Magnificas, Salmos, Salues y otras cossas a dos y a tres choras para con el organo, de que ba Libro particular que a gloria de Dios nuestro señor no ha salido en España, ni en Ytalia Libro particular como este para los organistas, porque con el donde no hubiere aparejo de quatro voces vna sola que cante con el organo ara coros de por ssi. Tambien ba Missa y magnifica para uoces, organo y ministriles. E traido a España la ymprision y echo algun gasto. Suplico a V. S. reciuia mi boluntad y mande se prueuen esos Libros y açiendome alguna merçed para ayuda al gasto la reconocere yo toda la uida, la qual nuestro señor prospere a V. S., como yo deseo. En Madrid a 10 de hebrero 1601.

Thome de Victoria.<sup>19</sup>

17 DANIELE V. FILIPPI, *Tomás Luis de Victoria*, Palermo, L'Epos Società Editrice, 2008.

18 KENNETH KREITNER, *Minstrels in Spanish Churches, 1400-1600*, «Early Music», 20/4 (1992), pp. 532-546.

19 PEDRO JIMENEZ CAVALLE, *Documentario Musical De La Catedral De Jaen Ii. Documentos De Secretaria*, Granada, Junta de Andalucia, 2010, p. 15 ([www.bibliotecavirtualdeandalucia.es](http://www.bibliotecavirtualdeandalucia.es)).

## *Doubling or substituting the voices with instruments in the madrigal repertoire*

It is known that music was one of the fundamental disciplines for the formation of gentlemen, and that the practice of music, whether instrumental or vocal, was one of the favourite pastimes of the upper classes. The vast iconography of the Renaissance is full of works which depict scenes of music making. In the greater number of cases they concern music making in a domestic setting showing groups of singers and players in the act of performing music reading from partbooks, which refer to the performance of madrigals or its related forms. In some cases instruments double all the voices; in others they even substitute for some of the vocal lines.



Fig. 7 - SEBASTIAN VRANCX (1573-1647), *Festival in a palace garden*, c.1620: four singers – three female and one male – sing from partbooks accompanied by a lute, a dulcimer and a small bowed instrument, while a cornett lies on the case of the lute.



Fig. 8 - GERARD VAN HONTORST (1592-1656), *Musicians by candlelight* (1623): The Dutch painter painted many musical scenes. In his *Musicians by candlelight* a young couple and a youth perform a polyphonic composition accompanied by lute



Fig. 9 - PIETER DE HOOCH (1629-1684), in his *Portrait of a family making music* of 1663, depicts all the components of a family seated around a table and intent on playing and singing: the mother sings, accompanied on the violin by her husband, the daughter plays a plucked instrument, and the son a recorder; on the left we see a violoncello leaning on a chair

The frontespieces of the two treatises on instruments by Silvestro Ganassi, *La Fontegara*, dedicated to the recorder<sup>20</sup> (Fig. 10) and *Regola rubertina*<sup>21</sup> dedicated to the viol (Fig. 11), show singers and instrumentalists in the act of performing polyphony; some parts are performed by solo instruments.

Chronicles of important events, whether private or public, attest to the central role that music played in Renaissance. The Lords competed for the most fashionable musicians, and no court was without its palace musicians and an excellent choir for its church. The marriage of Cosimo I de' Medici was one of the most important civic events for mid-16th century Florence, and the fascicle containing the music performed that day is an incredible testimony to the variety of possible vocal and instrumental combinations in the Renaissance.<sup>22</sup> Next to the titles of the compositions by Francesco

20 SILVESTRO GANASSI, *Opera Intitulata Fontegara, la quale insegna a suonare di flauto chon tutta l'arte opportuna*, Venezia, Presso l'autore, 1535.

21 SILVESTRO GANASSI, *Regola rubertina. Regola che insegna a sonar de viola d'archo tastada*, Venezia, Presso l'autore, 1542.

22 *Musiche fatte nelle nozze dello illustrissimo Duca di Firenze il Signor Cosimo de Medici et della illustrissima consorte sua Mad. Leonora da Toledo*, Venezia, Antonio Gardano, 1539.



Fig. 10 - SILVESTRO GANASSI, *Opera Intitulata Fontegara* (1535), frontispiece



Fig. 11 - SILVESTRO GANASSI, *Regola rubertina* (1542), frontispiece



Corteccia we can read, in fact, annotations which indicate in detail which organics were employed in performing the music (Fig. 12):

- *Ingredere*, for eight voices: «sung above the arch of the Porta a Prato city gate by twenty-four voices of a group, and with another made up of four trombones and four *cornetti*, for the entrance of the Most Illustrious Duchess»;
- *Vattene almo riposo*, for four voices: «sung by Aurora and played with a *gravicembalo* with little organs and various registers»;
- *Guardane almo pastore*, for six voices: «sung at the end of the first act by six shepherds, and then sung again by them and played by another six shepherds with *le storte*»;
- *Chi ne l'a toll'oimè*, for six voices: «sung at the end of the second act by three sirens, and by three marine monsters played with three traverse flutes and by three sea nymphs with three lutes all together...»;
- And so on, until we reach the end: *Bacco Bacco euoè* for four voices sung and danced by four *bachchante* and four satyrs, and played by another eight satyrs, with various instruments all playing together».

Musica delle nozze dello Illustrissimo Duca di Firenze Il Signor Cosimo de' Medici et della Illustrissima conserza sua Madama Leonora di Toledo.

LA TAVOLA.

Ingredere a otto voci di Franc. corteccia cantato sopra l'arco del portone della porta al prato da vintiquattro voci da una banda, et da l'altra da quattro tromboni, et quattro cornetti nella entrata della Illustrissima Duchessa.	II
Sacro et santo bimento a nove voci di Franc. corteccia cantato dalle muse con le sette seguenti canzonette il giorno del conuito.	V
Piu che mai usaga a quattro voci	X
Leta per honorarte a quattro voci	XII
Ecco Signor uolterra a cinque voci	XIII
Come lieta si mostra a quattro voci	XVI
Non men ch'ogn'altra lieta a quattro voci	XVIII
Ecco la fida ancella a quattro voci	XX
Ecco Signor il Tebro a cinque voci	XXII
Musica della comedia di Franc. Corteccia recitata al secondo conuito.	
Vattene almo riposo a quattro voci cantata dall'aurora, et sonata con uno grave cimolo con organetti et con uariii reglia	XXIII
Siri per principio della comedia	XXV
Guardane almo pastore a sei voci cantata a la fine del primo atto da sei pastori, et dipoi ricantata da detti et sonata insieme da sei altri pastori con le storte.	XXVI
Chi ne l'a toll'oime a sei voci cantata a la fine del secondo atto da tre sirene, et da tre monstri marini sonati con tre traverse, et da tre Ninfe marine con tre liuti tutti insieme	XXVII
O begli anni del'oro a quattro voci sonata a la fine del terzo atto da Sileno con un uolone sonando tutte le parti, et cantando il soprano	XXVIII
Hor chi mai cantera a quattro voci cantata a la fine del quarto atto da otto nimphe cacciatrici	XXIX
Vienene almo riposo a cinque voci cantata alla fine del quinto atto dalla notte, et sonata con quattro tremboni	XXX
Bacco bacco euoè a quattro voci cantata et ballata da quattro Bacchante et quattro satiri, et sonata da altri otto satiri, con uariii strumenti tutti ad un tempo, laquale subito dopo la notte fu la fine della comedia.	XXXI

Fig. 12 - Musiche fatte nelle nozze dello illustrissimo Duca di Firenze (1539), p. [31] (fascicle containing the music performed on the occasion of the marriage of Cosimo I de' Medici)

## Conclusion

To have spoken about my methodological approach has been an important occasion for rediscovering the path which has brought me to early music. I entered this world, one might say, “by the back door”. I began my professional career as an oboist, I then became fascinated by teaching, and only later did I discover the world of choirs and early music, beginning to perform medieval music with historic instruments. I performed concerts for years, using hundreds of scores in the conviction that the score in itself contained all the information useful for revealing the beauty of the music. My encounter with historical sources has been overwhelming; it produced doubt about all my preceding beliefs, revealing new horizons and profoundly changing- for the better – my approach to music. I understood that a score never expresses itself alone, but also the world which generated it, and to be credible and engaging, performances must derive from a confrontation with that world. Musicological research has produced entire libraries of historical evidence, and I have learnt to nurture my vocation as performer with the work of the theorists. Charles Rosen<sup>23</sup> maintains that «musicology relates to musicians as ornithology is for birds», and I am profoundly grateful to musicologists, because it is only thanks to their studies that I have learnt what it means to fly.

*(English translation: Kathryn Bosi Monteath)*

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23 See SHERMAN, *Interviste sulla musica antica* cit., p. 3.