Chapter 3.: Ornamentation and improvisation of EM of the Middle Ages, Renaissance and (early) baroque

Chapter 3.Ornamentation and Improvisation in Early Music of the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and (Early) Baroque

Introduction

By now, you've probably noticed that in my quoting of books or articles, I've given much more space to some (contemporary) authors than others, and some of them appear in multiple places or chapters. The reason should be clear, but I'll still mention it; those authors have dedicated a significant part of their research (some purely theoretical, and some more practical) and publishing activities to the phenomenon of improvisation in general - and ornamentation, improvisation, and performance practice in early music, in particular. This primarily refers to contributions I've taken (and which have continually inspired me for the past 30 years...) from Canadian colleague Timothy J. McGee, the author of numerous books and articles on the performance practice of medieval and Renaissance music.

This chapter (as evident from the title) deals in more detail with two topics; ornamentation (on the various names under which it appears, see the following section) and improvisation. As I've already mentioned[1], some consider them essentially the same thing, with true improvisation being a kind of culmination, the highest degree of ornamentation - without notes (from which one sings or plays) but based on certain rules and the use of a whole range of "modules" and others see them as two, different things. Therefore, this chapter has clearly separated two parts; the first extensively deals with ornamentation (discussing a range of treatises, manuals published by professional musicians (and some music theorists), of the time between 1535 and 1636 - precisely a span of one hundred years), while the second part is dedicated to the improvisation of early music and in other arts like theatre, dance and painting.

I deliberately separated the practical advices on both subjects in which we find very concrete instructions on how to learn ornamentation and improvisation in early music (of late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Early Baroque) and put them into a separate, 5th chapter. During the work on this compendium, my original study devoted to the improvisation on both *liras*[2] has "outgrown" all the frames of the original version of that text, so I decided to dedicate a whole new, 7th chapter to it.

When we speak or think about ornamentation in early music of the pre-Baroque periods, we must be aware from the very beginning of the fundamental difference between it and what we, academically trained musicians of our time, have learned during our own extensive musical education and studies; those few (compared to early music) "mordents" and "trills" - usually decided by the composer and fixed with appropriate signs in the printed edition.

3.0.1. Various terms meaning (almost) the same thing: diminution, divisions, coloration, ornamentation, and improvisation...

In different (but also the same) languages, there are various terms that basically mean (almost) the same thing (see the brief explanations of terms that follow) for a performance that is either completely improvised (based on certain freer or very rigorous rules and models) or is based on a written composition to which an individual performer[3] adds a greater or lesser number of embellishments, which may be slightly different in each live performance or (repeated) recording today.

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[1] As for instance John Bass, see in Chapter 1.
[2] I. Pomykalo: *How to Improvise on the Lire, da braccio and da gamba*, 2018.
[3] Or more of them.

Improvisation: "occurs when an instrumentalist or vocalist composes on the spot without preparation and without written music. The musician who improvises is called an improviser (improvisator)."

Diminution: "(Latin: *diminuere* to diminish) 1. The repetition of a part of a composition (motif, theme, figure) in smaller note values (first halving, then dividing by three, quartering), most commonly applied in contrapuntal sections. First applied in the 13th century (two-voice *clausulae*).

Ornamentation: "the embellishment of a melody or individual tones with certain tonal figures of shorter duration." "Musical ornaments or embellishments (Eng. and Fr. *ornaments* from Latin *ornamentum*, meaning decoration) are tones or groups of tones added to the principal tones of a melody (usually on accented parts of the measure) designed to make the melody more beautiful, developed, ornate, lively."

3.0.2. On Ornamentation in General (I. Horsley, T. McGee, B. Thomas, and D. Marunović):

I have decided to "give the floor" here to a few colleagues who have dedicated one or more articles, books, etc., to this topic (starting from the early 1950s). Considering the extensive nature of the entire issue, originally I have limited myself to the Renaissance period, leaving all practical advice on ornamentation (and improvisation) for Chapter 5, the "practical" chapter but in this English version decided to add some information for the medieval period too.

I. Horsley[4]: .... whenever one of these compositions was performed by a soloist or group of soloists, it was not always performed simply as written but was usually made "elegant" and "ornate" by the addition of florid embellishments. The use of this technique in keyboard and lute transcriptions is well known, but it is not so generally recognized that it was also the accepted practice to ornament the individual lines in solo vocal or instrumental performance of these compositions. These florid embellishments, added by each soloist to his own part, often resulted in a complete transformation of the work.

T. McGee: Ornamentation; tradition[5]

The tradition of improvising entire compositions and ornamenting existing works is as old as music itself. In the past each performer was to some degree a composer, and when he was not inventing whole compositions of his own, he was 'assisting 'other composers by filling out their works with graces and divisions. There is evidence that the practice continued unbroken from the earliest times until finally in the nineteenth century it was restricted to folk and dance musicians while so-called 'serious 'or 'classical 'musicians were constrained to play only what was printed on the page. The complex chromaticism of the Romantic era put an end to the freedom that had been every performer's right and duty until then. As a result, the twentieth-century conservatory-trained musician learns to play only what is written and not to add anything - a training that is unfortunately at odds with the performance of early music and must be overcome if early music is to be performed correctly. The composers of the early centuries expected the performer to add to the written score; it was a fact of performance life and everyone accepted it. To re-create the

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[4] Imogene Horsley: Improvised Embellishment in the Performance of Renaissance Polyphonic Music, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 4, no. 1 (Spring, 1951), p. 3-19.
[5] Timothy J. McGee: *Medieval and Renaissance Music, A Performers Guide*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto Buffalo, London1988.

music of the early centuries correctly, then, present-day performers must learn how to ornament and improvise so that they may present the early repertory as it was actually performed.[6]

Horsley: If present-day training in strictly reproductive performance makes it difficult to accept the idea of such free treatment of compositions, it must be remembered that in the Renaissance period both vocal and instrumental virtuosity were still based upon skill in improvisation.

McGee: Present-day musicians, on the other hand, must learn the entire technique of inventing music after having received a training which specifically discourages this sort of activity and, to further complicate the problem, must learn all at once a variety of styles from several different centuries and places. Nevertheless, in spite of the difficulties, modern performers are encouraged to attempt ornamentation and improvisation which, when finally mastered, will add greatly to the authentic re-creation of the early repertory.

Horsley: From the early 16th century, manuals for teaching instrumental and vocal performance included sections on the technique of improvised embellishment as a matter of course. By diligent practice a performer acquired a vocabulary of melodic figures which could be introduced between the melodic intervals making up the individual lines of a composition. He developed a repertory of patterns, for example, which could be substituted for the skip of a third within the duration of a semibreve; and whenever he saw that interval in the melodic line he was reading, he could use one of these figures in place of the simple interval skip. This technique was applied in Ortiz 'third case—that of playing "over" a composition—since even when playing a composed piece of music the performer was not expected to reproduce the notes literally. A proficient soloist improvised embellishments upon the composed line, exhibiting his own skill. Performance was to him a creative application of his technique to a composition; the composition was the vehicle of, rather than the motive for, his performance.

Horsley continues saying that during the 16th century Italy was the centre from which this practice radiated but it was firmly established in the important musical centres of Spain and Germany too. In the same period it was known but not equally accepted in France. In England we don't find any mention of its use. It seems that the English madrigals and fantasias for viols were performed exactly as written.[7]

Horsley: The general term for this improvised embellishment in Italy was *diminutio* (diminution), since it was, in effect, the breaking up of the longer note values into an aggregation of notes of shorter duration. In Spain the embellishments were known as *glosas* ; in Germany and the Netherlands as *coloriren*; Latin treatises described the ornamented line as "ornatus," "coloratus," etc.; but despite the difference in names, the technique itself was uniform.

Horsley say that the practice was not uniform everywhere and that there also were disagreements both as to the desirability of its use and as to the limits of its application.[8]

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[6]Indeed, it remains an eternal question and a subject of doubt to what extent, despite all efforts, theoretical research, practical applications, and countless experiments by practitioners, it is truly possible to re-create early music. After my half a century of experience in this field, I believe it is more realistic to say that we are dealing with one aspect of contemporary music that is deeply inspired by the music and assumed sounds, as well as the timbre of instruments, that belonged to earlier music. For further details, please refer to Chapter 2, starting from page 7.

[7]IH: The term *division* comes from *diminutio*, but this in itself is not proof that improvised diminution was used in 16th century England. IP: But why not due to the fact that at that time a number of Italian musicians and composers (born in Italy or at least of Italian origin, like younger member of Ferrabosco family) have been active at the English court.

[8] See later under 3.2.2 Negative or critical on ornamentation (and improvisation), p.28

Here are certain broad musical characteristics that separated Renaissance usage from succeeding ornamental practices (Horsley):

1. The style of embellishment was very free. Neither the forms of the ornamental figures nor their placement within the phrase was stereotyped, nor were any signs placed in the music to indicate their use. Each manual contains a number of cadential patterns, apart from the general melodic figures, but the only unifying factor in these cadences is the fact that they are all embellishments of the common melodic cadence formulas of the period.

2. The ornamental patterns, no matter how ornate they might be, always retained the balanced melodic line and smoothly flowing rhythm characteristic of the composed music of the time.

3. Great care was taken to preserve all the important vertical consonances of the composition, no matter how free the linear and rhythmic detail might be between those consonances.

4. No difference was made between vocal and instrumental music as far as the style of embellishment figures was concerned. Writers were usually careful to state that their ornaments were equally appropriate for voice and for wind and stringed instruments.

Horsley mentions that some writers emphasize one aspect, some another and that on some questions exists complete disagreement. The details of the practice are varying from time to time, from place to place, and from performer to performer, because really good virtuoso developed her/his own style of improvisation and embellishment.

B. Thomas:[9] The subject of divisions in sixteenth-century music has a rather theoretical feeling to many of us today. We all know that they were frequently used (though in theory banned from certain kinds of liturgical music), but we really understand remarkably little about how they were used. And in practice very few performers of pre-Baroque music today (1992) pay much attention to this question, apart from a handful (mostly North Americans) who studied at Basle. In Britain the use of divisions is still comparatively rare, especially among the more established 'serious 'performers of early music - curiously those who work in the more informal end of the spectrum are frequently a lot more adventurous in this respect.

At the beginning of nineties with the exception of Basle and latter Geneva there have been very few places in the Europe or elsewhere where you can study anything prior to Baroque music, which is what Thomas established in his article from 1992. Fortunately, this gradually changed and now there are relatively few conservatories or colleges in the world where there is not at least some opportunity to learn, sing or play some medieval or renaissance music.

Thomas: Essentially, a student of Renaissance ornamentation has to piece together a style in a jigsaw-like process of adding together bits of information from many sources; with much late Baroque music the information is more immediate, and the technique-building part of the repertory is easily available. So it is not surprising that the young student, when faced with the decision of how to spend his few precious years at college, chooses the Baroque option, in which he has some idea of the end result, rather than the Renaissance (or earlier) option, which requires much work of a more experimental nature.[10]

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[9] Bernard Thomas: Divisions in Renaissance music, in: *Companion to Medieval & Renaissance Music*, ed .: T. Knighton and D. Fallows, J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd, London 1992.

[10] I would add to this also the "market" factor; players of Baroque instruments as members of permanent Baroque orchestras can sometimes make a living from it, which is (speaking from my own experience and the experience of many colleagues) a rare case among specialists in medieval or Renaissance music.

The basic problem is that we are talking about reconstructing a whole style of performance from a very motley (and frequently unrepresentative) collection of source materials. To place the problem in some sort of context, it is as if in four hundred years 'time someone wanted to reconstruct Oscar Peterson's performing style, not by means of listening to whole performances, but only by reference to lists of riffs from some kind of teach-yourself-jazz book or computer programme.

Considering that Bernard Thomas plays jazz himself, his following thought is very interesting:[11]

Analogies with jazz are useful, because they remind us that the Renaissance tradition of diminution was part of an organic musical style that musicians - both professional and *dilettante* - would have absorbed from an early age. Jazz grew over much of the present century in a similar organic fashion, and also developed similar virtuoso styles of improvisation.

Thomas continues by explaining that to learn Renaissance ornamentation today, the student needs to acquire a vocabulary of division motifs suitable for different musical situations. Learning how to apply these motifs is more challenging and depends to some extent on elementary and practical knowledge of counterpoint, such as improvising counterpoint to given melodies rather than doing exercises on paper. Colleges of music used to treat theoretical concepts as completely separate from performance, which did not help the situation. However, this approach has changed over time. Thomas makes a very appropriate comparison between learning to speak a <u>language</u> and the process of learning divisions[12] because a new word or phrase has to be used several times before it becomes a firm part of the speaker's active <u>vocabulary</u>. Without the repetition and consolidation

"the student is like a tourist who has constantly to refer to his phrase book."

Thomas: There are, of course, a number of treatises on divisions, or diminution manuals, as musicologists like to call them. Apart from Ganassi (1535) and Ortiz (1553), these are all clustered in the forty or so years from 1584 onwards (the date of Dalla Casa's *Il vero modo di diminuir*), and all appeared in northern Italy. While they differ in emphasis (Ganassi focused on the recorder, Ortiz on the viol, and Dalla Casa on the *cornetto*, while Bovicelli concentrated on the human voice), most of the books have one important characteristic in common; the core of each volume is a table of divisions organized according to interval (that is, you are presented with twenty ways of decorating a note that rises by a tone, followed by a set of different figures for rising a third, and so on); there are normally separate tables of cadential decorations in the most common modes. Most also have some examples of decorated top parts, or in some cases of *viola bastarda* music, which represents the pinnacle of the whole development.[13]

Thomas highlights two very interesting features of the above-mentioned books:

With the exceptions of Ganassi and Ortiz, there is a dramatic change in style over a few years.

1.While Dalla Casa essentially presents figures of fast - sometimes very fast - notes in runs of apparently equal semi- and demisemiquavers, and this pattern is continued, rather more tastefully by Bassano (1591), from Riccardo Rognoni (1592) onwards we find many irregular rhythms, and in general a mannered, almost erratic style that contrasts dramatically with the smooth flow of typical Renaissance divisions. …

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[11] Let us also remember what John Bass wrote on this subject, see Chapter 1., p.19

[12] See more about this interesting comparison between learning the language and improvisation by R. C.Wegman, Ch.4., pp.25-29.

[13] See latter in this Chapter on p.27.

2.The complete pieces chosen by the authors of these treatises were not current works of their own generation, but pieces from at least two generations back: a small group of Franco-Flemish chansons of the 1540s, and madrigals from Cipriano de Rore's first book, probably written about the same time, dominate the collections. This trend continues right up to Vincenzo Bonizzi's *viola bastarda* collection of 1626, which contains the most outrageously extreme settings of music, of anything up to a hundred years old (Sandrin's 'Douce memoire').

The original undecorated pieces are nothing more than springboards; they provide a nice safe structure over which the mannerist performers could create their personal improvisations, which could range from the elegant to the bizarre. I think we have to assume that the potential audience knew the models; much of the charm of this repertory is to do with interaction between new material and model.

D. Marunović[14]

A very interesting (and presumably rare) and important contribution to clarifying the issues of ornamentation, embellishment - and ultimately improvisation - in Croatian musicology (and terminology) was made in her master's thesis by Dejana Marunović, then a student at the University of Zagreb.[15]

Marunović divides treatises on ornamentation into three main groups:

a) instrumental schools

b) vocal schools

c) universal schools

In the introduction, the author mentions *Contrapuncto ex mente*, which we will delve into further later in Chapter 4 of this study.

At this point, there is a kind of "skeleton" list with titles of the most important treatises that discuss ornamentation in great detail, accompanied by numerous musical examples.

3.1. The most important treatises on ornamentation, in detail[16]:

Here I am quoting from various articles or books giving always the source, i.e. name of author.

Horsley warns (and we should keep this in mind) that even when these sources are put in chronological order, they may seem to indicate a certain line of evolution, but it would be dangerous to place them within any definite pattern of development. They were published for public consumption, and perhaps every great virtuoso and teacher had his own type of ornamentation and method of teaching.

Also, it should be remembered that each author assumes that an understanding of this technique is essential for any type of respectable performance; we could suppose that many of these manuals of

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[14] Dejana Marunović, graduate thesis at the Department of Musicology: "Related improvisation or composing through performance: art and practice of melodic decoration in Renaissance and Baroque music, Zagreb, February 2004, Mentor: Prof. PhD Stanislav Tuksar, Library of the Zagreb Academy of Music, number: 1627.

[15] The thesis was submitted in 2004, and her mentor was my former colleague from the ensemble "Universitas Studiorum Zagrabiensis" and renown Croatian musicologist, Professor Dr. Stanislav Tuksar.

[16] See in the Appendix under 8.7.1. List of the most important treatises on ornamentation.

this art were intended for amateur musicians, as it was an integral part of the professional's technique.

3.1.1 S.Ganassi dal Fontego, *Opera intitulata Fontegara…* Venice 1535

> **Horsley**:The first published manual to teach the art of diminution is the *Opera intitulata Fontegara* by Sylvestro di Ganassi, published in Venice in 1535.[17] The primary purpose of this book is to teach the technique of recorder playing, but it contains also a detailed description of the art of diminution. After discussing the basic problems of recorder playing, including tonguing, Ganassi states firmly that skill in making diminutions is as essential to a good technique as tonguing—in fact that a skill in either one without the other is utterly useless. He then defines diminution as meaning simply to vary a thing *(variare la cosa over processo)*.

Ganassi's treatment of diminution is more intricate compared to others who followed him; it appears that he assumes this technique to be an integral part of instrumental and vocal performance. This suggests that his art may have been fully developed and taught orally before he published his book. Interestingly, Ganassi is the only writer who incorporates proportions into his approach. His collection of ornamental patterns is divided into four major parts (*Regola prima, Regola secunda,* etc.) based on the rhythmic proportions involved.

> The first section has figures in the proportion of four semiminims[18] to a semibreve[19]; the second, five in the time of the preceding four; the third, six to the first four; and the fourth, seven to the four. He also explains how these proportions can be combined to make even more complicated relationships. In each of these sections he gives examples of patterns of ascending and descending seconds, thirds fourths, and fifths on the various notes of the scale, with many different manners of embellishing each. He also includes in each section examples of the embellished unison and of several common cadence patterns together with their ornamental versions. See Example 1:

Example III-1 Horsley ex.1-3, S. di Ganassi from the Opera intitulata Fontegara, 1535, Regola Prima/[20]

> Ganassi comforts the performer who is afraid of making contrapuntal errors with his diminutions by the assurance that such errors will slip by unnoticed because of the speed of their passing.[21]

Horsley notes that it is easy to see how these diminutions would transform a composition both melodically and rhythmically. Most of the diminutions completely change the direction of the melodic pattern for which they are substituted.

The complexity of Ganassi's ornaments, particularly concerning rhythm, the changes in proportions, and the intricate rhythmic patterns within these tempo changes, is certainly remarkable. It must have required from the performer an excellent sense of rhythm. The proof that Ganassi's influence must have been felt throughout the period is the fact that a century later the French theorist, Mersenne, mentions his book as a good source for diminutions.

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[17] Sylvestro di Ganassi dal Fontego, *Opera intitulata Fontegara La quale insegna a sonare di flauto chó tutta Carte opportuna a esso instrumento massime il diminuire il quale sara utile ad ogni istrumento di flato et chorde : et achora a chi si dileta di canto* (Venice, 1535; facsimile reprint, Milan, 1934, more recent ed. Forni Editore, Bologna, 1969).
[18] A Crotchet in UK and a Quarter note in USA and elsewhere.
[19] A whole note, USA and elsewhere; see in the Appendix under 8.6.Tables
[20] See Music Examples A. Ch. III-1 Horsley ex.1-3 Ganassi.
[21] See also by Ortiz later.

Some quotations about and from Ganassi:

Marunović: from S. Ganassi *Opera Intitulata Fontegara*, 1535):

> '"...diminution is nothing more than an embellishment of counterpoint ...'

...Ganassi's (1535) diminutions, intended for amateurs, due to their virtuosity and rhythmic complexity (longer duration notes divided first according to regular *ratios* and then according to ratios like 4:5, 4:7), not only question their intended improvisational character but it seems they were never surpassed.

Ulrike Engelke (from Ganassi):[22]

> "Diminution is simply the variation of a naturally short and simple sequence of notes."

3.1.2 S. Ganassi *Regola Rubertina*, I, 1542; II, 1543.

Horsley: Ganassi, in his *Regola Rubertina* (Venice, 1542; facsimile reprint, Leipzig, 1924[23]), a manual for teaching the *viola d' arco*, [i.e. viol] mentions diminutions only briefly (cap. xviii). He fears that performers may avoid using them in cadences (where they are most common) because of technical difficulties, so he gives three examples in tablature showing how to make them without having to go from one string to another. The diminutions he gives here are very simple.

Marunović:

A few years later, Ganassi (in *Regola Rubertina*, II, 1543) theoretically discusses the possibility of instrumental accompaniment on the *violone* [viol!], although the favoured Renaissance instruments for polyphonic performance (accompaniment) were the viola*, lira*, and lute: the written melody is performed vocally with improvised diminutions while the other parts of the written composition are performed instrumentally without improvisational embellishments.

3.1.3 A.Petit Coclico, *Compendium musices*, Nuremberg, 1552

Horsley: The next book discussing the art of improvised embellishment is the *Compendium musices* of Adrian Petit Coclicus, published in 1552.[24] In a chapter entitled *De elegantia et ornatu, aut pronuntiatione in canendo*, he gives a short summary of the art of coloratura ornamentation. Coclicus does not give a list of intervals with corresponding embellishments, but he does give a number of melodic phrases in simple and ornamented form. He also includes ornate versions of two two-part songs (without the simple versions) and simple and ornate versions of a fuga, but he does not give any specific rules as to the application of these embellishments to composed music. His ornaments have a much simpler plan that those of Ganassi and do not deviate so greatly from the unornamented line, example 4).

/*Example III-2 Horsley ex. 4 - Adrian Petit Coclicus from the Compendium musices, 1552, ex.5 - D. Ortiz, from Tratado de glosas sobre clausulas y otros generos de puntos ... and*

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[22] Engelke, Ulrike: *Musik und Sprache/ Music and Language*, Zimmermann ZM 2814 / pan 174, Frankfurt, 1990, the English translation are taken from this edition.

[23] More recent by Forni Editore, Bologna, 1978.

[24] Adriano Petit Coclicus, *Compendium musices* descriptum ab Adriano Petit Coclico, discipulo Josquini des Pres (Nuremberg, 1552).

ex.6 - D. Ortiz, from Tratado de glosas sobre clausulas y otros generos de puntos ./[25]

Coclicus claims to have been a pupil of Josquin des Prez, and prefaces his musical examples with the remark: *Haec est prima clausula quam Josquinus docuit suos*. He also states positively that the greatest masters of this type of florid singing come from the Netherlands, and he esteems no musician who is not a practitioner of coloratura singing. Whether or not his claims are true, his ornaments agree in style with those used in his time and his book undoubtedly had influence upon his contemporaries.

Horsley mentions that throughout the whole period, there is great disagreement as to which voices in a polyphonic composition free embellishments could be added. Coclicus, the first to discuss this question, insists that the lowest voice should not be ornamented because it is the fundamental upon which all the other parts rest.

Marunović: quote from Adrian P. Coclico (*Compendium musices*, 1551/1552?):

'The singer who not only sings a piece as it is written but also embellishes it, transforms ... *Cantus simplex, communis, planus, crudus* into *Cantus elegans, ornatus*, flavorless food into salted and seasoned (*Caro cum sale et sinapio*).'

3.1.4 D.Ortiz, *Tratado de glosas sobre clausulas*, Rome, 1553:[26]

Horsley: In 1553, Diego Ortiz published his *Tratado de glosas*. The second section of this book, which has already been mentioned, contains musical examples showing the different ways in which the *violone*[27] may be played with the cembalo. The first section, like Ganassi's *Fontegara*, gives examples and definite rules for the making of *glosas* upon a composition, and these rules are similar to those given by Ganassi.

Ortiz, like Ganassi, consolingly states that any resulting errors in counterpoint will not stand out because of the swiftness of their passing. Ortiz's decorative patterns are much simpler than those of Ganassi. ...

His rhythmic patterns are simple and his melodic outlines more conventional than those of Ganassi. He gives many more embellished cadences than ornamented intervals, including many variations on all the cadence formulas commonly used in his time. Although none of the theorists give any definite rules to the effect that cadences are always to be ornamented, the fact that all the manuals contain cadence patterns set off from the other ornaments would suggest that even at this date an ornamented cadence was obligatory in correct solo performance.

After the cadences, Ortiz gives several examples of seconds, thirds, fourths, and fifths, ascending and descending in breves[28], semibreves, and minims[29], as well as two scale patterns rising and falling through a fifth, with several ornamental versions of each (Ex. 6).

Ortiz 'glosas tend to be composed of a comparatively small number of stereotyped figures. In one important particular they differ from the diminutions of Ganassi: they do not ignore intervening notes by going from semibreve to semibreve but are made upon single notes (breve,

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[25] See Music Examples A. Ch. III-2 Horsley ex. 4 Coclico, ex.5 and 6 Ortiz.
[26] Diego Ortiz, *Tratado de glosas sobre clausulas y otros generos de puntos en la musica de violones* (Rome, 1553; reprint, ed. Max Schneider, Berlin, 1913).
[27] I.e. viol.
[28] Double whole note, USA and elsewhere.
[29] A half note in the USA and elsewhere.

semibreve, and minim). Although the cadence formulas and *glosas* made upon scale passages are freer, this simplicity in the diminutions of melodic intervals would tend to make the performer hold more closely to the composed line. Ortiz gives no actual application of these ornaments to polyphonic performance. The examples given in the second book, in which the *violone* ornaments a line of a polyphonic composition while the composition is played complete on the cembalo, show a freer application of the technique. As Ortiz himself says, when all parts are played on the cembalo the *violone* can be much more free than when an ensemble of stringed instruments is performing such a composition, for the cembalo insures that the harmonies will always be complete.

An expert performer was expected to produce music as well as reproduce it. In his book published in 1553 Diego Ortiz describes the three ways in which a performer on the *violone* may play with the cembalo: the first is the improvisation of a fantasia by both players together; the second, the improvisation by the violone player of a melody above a plain chant played on the cembalo. Only the third and last way is to play *sobre cosas compuestas*—"over" a composed piece of music.[30]

Engelke: In his Tutor on Diminution (1553) Diego Ortiz wrote the following:

'Whoever wants to make advantageous use of this book must first consider his skill and, according to it, choose the most suitable variations, because even a good variation will fall flat if the hand cannot properly realize it; the variation itself would not be at fault in this case.

This book shows the way to the correct varying of the notes; the grace and the effects created by the hand have, of course, to be produced by the player: with soft bowing he may play his part in differing ways, even using some subdued trills and some runs. The bowing hand should not play the latter in jolts, but quietly, and the left hand should mainly play the harmony. If a passage contains two or three semiminims only the first one should be emphasized; the other ones can be played without change of bow, as I have said before. As this can better be shown in theory, I will leave it to the intelligence of the musician and talk about the ways of varying. There are three of them:

How to vary the voice part (supra librum):

The first and most perfect way: when using a run or variation to go from one note to the next, the last note of the variation should be the same as the varied note, as shown below:"

/*Example III-3 Engelke, ex.1 - 3/*[31]

This is the most perfect way, because it begins and ends the variation the same way as the unvaried melody (*cantollano*), so there can be no imperfection.

The second way takes more liberties: It does not proceed like the plain melody, on the contrary, as shown below:

This way is essential, because its freedom brings about good things and pretty preludes which cannot be achieved using only the first way; therefore, in some parts of this book, I shall

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[30]Although I.Horsley does not explicitly say or interpret it, Ortiz may have been referring to improvisation "over" an existing, composed work, chanson, or madrigal - something that he later presents himself with a series of examples. European courts and many cities (including our Dubrovnik) were filled with such professional musicians, both vocalists and instrumentalists, but even amateurs and dilettantes were not far behind in this regard...

[31] See Music Examples A. Ch. III-3 Engelke, ex. 1-3 Ortiz 2

apply it. One could hold against it that, when moving from one crotchet to another, two perfect consonances could occur with another voice (the leap, *cayda*, not being the same as in varied notes); but this is unimportant, as the parallel consonances (octaves and fifths) cannot be heard because of the speed.

The third way is to digress from the composition, roughly going by ear, without really being sure what one is playing; quite a few musicians are wont to do that, in order to demonstrate their modest skill, but they diverge from the composition, doing things at the wrong time and without measure, finally reaching any cadenza or note known to them. This is an objectionable practice in music, because it does not correspond to the composition and thus cannot reach perfection.

Cadences:

Remember: If in the simple cadenza (like the first one) a raising of a note is indicated — with this sign **t** — all notes in counterpoint must be raised; if the simple cadenza contains no such sign, it must not be put anywhere.

The subject of his second book is "the way of playing the viola da gamba together with the harpsichord." He wrote:

There are three ways of playing (see by Horsley, above, p.10): The first one is the fantasy, the second one the simple melody (*cantollano*), the third one the elaborate polyphonic setting.

About the second way to play the *violone* with the harpsichord — i.e. over a simple melody (*cantollano*) — Ortiz writes:

Ricarcade [sic!] for the viola da gamba over a simple melody, which is taken over and accompanied with chords by the harpsichord.

About the third way to play the *violone* with the harpsichord — i.e. over elaborately composed pieces — he gives the following instruction:

Take a madrigal or motet or any other work you want to play and transfer it to the harpsichord, as it is usually done: the *violone* player can now play two, three or more variations on every composed piece.[32]

One possibility is to vary the soprano part. "Here it is better for the harpsichord not to play the soprano part."

It is also possible to vary the *tenor,* the *altus* or the *bassus*.

Marunović on Ortiz:

"The part to be ornamented must be taken and rewritten. When reaching the place to be ornamented in the book, one should look for (the corresponding) type of notes: if it is a clause under the clauses, and if not, then under other indicators. There, all the deviations shown for those notes will be seen, and the one that seems the best should be chosen and placed at the place of the cantus firmus."

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[32] See Music Examples A. Ch. III-4 Engelke, ex.4 Arcadelt – Ortiz 3

Thomas: To return to Ortiz, there are a number of reasons - quite apart from the timing of his publication right in the middle of the century - to take his material very seriously indeed in any study of Renaissance improvisation:

1.The high quality of his finished pieces, especially the *recercadas* on ground basses. Perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of these is his use of what Virgiliano calls *'perfidie'*. This is where a figure is apparently repeated, but changed by its context: for instance, with an initial appearance beginning after the beat, and the second beginning on the beat, or alternatively the use of a figure played first over one chord, then over another. We have to respect any musician who can produce material like this. Even his little pieces over the *La Spagna* melody are effortless and unpretentious masterpieces of improvised counterpoint, He is not at all interested in last notes for their own sake, but rather in achieving balance, grace and elegance.

2.His tables of divisions are useful in several ways: they are not particularly difficult technically, and yet they are more varied and less mechanical than Dalla Casa's. A nice feature is the inclusion of triplets, which many of the other sources ignore.

3.His material can be - with reasonable safety - applied to music of roughly his own time. It is true that the two models he chooses for complete examples (Sandrin's "*Douce memoire*" and Arcadelt's "*O felici occhi miei*") are from one generation back, but what he does with them does not necessarily involve slowing them down dramatically.

4.Especially interesting are his examples of 'fifth-part 'writing[33]. This may seem academic, but it is far from being so. Study of much four-part sixteenth-century music shows a surprisingly fixed approach to the division of the material between the parts, especially at cadences; until well after the middle of the century the early Renaissance convention by which the top part normally had the leading note and the tenor the note above the final at cadences continued in force, at least in the majority of cases. This convention may seem boring, until we examine the question of fifth parts. The very predictably of the voice-leading in the basic four parts allows a remarkable degree of freedom in the fifth part, as well as forcing it into certain melodic behaviour that would be unthinkable in any of the basic four parts. From the middle of the sixteenth century onwards, a definite tradition of fifth parts can be found in simple dance music (for example, the Hessen books of 1555, but also in the occasional piece in the Attaingnant dance books of 1530-57); the progressions forced on these parts by the desire to avoid consecutives can often seem bizarre, but their very eccentricity can, in the right hands, become a virtue. Ortiz's fifth parts on "*O felici occhi miei*" and "*Douce memoire*" should be studied and committed to memory by every serious student of Renaissance music.

N. Vicentino: *L'Antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica*, Rome1555

A. Smith:[34] What Vicentino has to say concretely about the use of diminutions in consort, however, does not correspond in entirety with current practice today:

There are some singers, however who display to listeners scant judgment and consideration in their singing, for when they come upon a sad passage they sing it joyfully and, conversely, when the passage is joyful they sing it sadly.[35] Such persons are advised that diminutions made in the proper places and in tempo will seem good.

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[33] Ortiz called it *quinta pars.*
[34] Anne Smith: *The Performance of the 16th - Century Music*, Oxford University Press, 2011.
[35] This Vicentino's advice recall agin the rhetoric.

Moreover, such diminutions should be used in [works for] more than four voices, because diminution always causes the loss of numerous consonances and the burden of many dissonances. Even though the diminution may seem smooth to inexperienced listeners, it nevertheless impoverishes the harmony. To avoid losing harmony in compositions while singers display a refined talent for diminution, it is a good idea to have such diminution accompanied by instruments that play the composition accurately, without diminution. For harmony cannot be lost through diminution if the instrument holds the consonances for their full values.[36] Sometimes while a player diminishes a composition, the singer also decides to diminish the work they are both performing. In this case, if both performers diminish simultaneously but fail to produce an identical passaggio in agreement with each other, they will truly not be in accord. But if they are well-coordinated it will be good to hear. Moreover, in compositions sung without instruments, diminutions sound good in works for more than four voices, because wherever a consonance is missing it is replaced by another part, either at the octave or the unison. The composition will not be left bereft of harmony, because the singers making the diminution proceed by wandering among the parts, sometimes at the unison, sometimes at the second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, or octave—touching now one part and now another with various consonances and dissonances—which dissonances seem consonant without being so owing to the rapidity of the singing.

The concept that diminutions should only be sung in works of four (or fewer) voices if the voices are also played in their plain form on instruments—in order to avoid an impoverishment of the "harmonic" structure—is fascinating. "Harmonic" here may be understood as referring to the entire body of the composition, to all the lines in their relationship to one another as Bonnie Blackburn demonstrated in her discussion of the meaning of *harmonia* at this time.[37]

Thus Vicentino apparently felt that by singing or playing diminutions in pieces with a smaller number of voices, that the consonant vertical sonorities were weakened to such a degree that the passing dissonances of the ornamenting voice were unpleasant to hear. When there were more than four voices the harmonies were considered to be sufficiently full to support the movement of the embellished part through the various voices, at times touching one voice and at times another. It is possible that in this context he is thinking of the *alla bastarda* diminutions, in which the ornamentation makes use of the full ambitus of range of a voice or instrument (in particular the bass viol, or *viola bastarda*), skipping in an elaborate fashion from part to part. Interesting to note, too, is that he suggests that an instrument play a plain version of the part that a singer is embellishing. This is the opposite of the practice today, where if parts are doubled it is usually the singer who is supporting the instrumentalist's virtuosity. Furthermore if two musicians, an instrumentalist, and a singer were playing the same part there were three possibilities for the embellishment: that only one person improvised them; that both musicians played the same diminution; or that the musicians in some way coordinated the ornamental passages with one another. Heterophony apparently did not receive approbation.

3.1.5 H.Finck, *Pratica musica*, Wittenberg, 1556

Horsley: Heinrich Finck *Practica musica*[38] contains a section entitled *De arte eleganter et suaviter cantandi* which discusses the technique of singing and its companion art of coloratura embellishment. Very sensibly Finck declares that in the final analysis the art of coloratura embellishment depends upon the aptitude and skill of the individual performer.

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[36] See above, Ortiz.

[37] Bonnie J. Blackburn, "On Compositional Process in the Fifteenth Century," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 40 (1987), pp. 219-233.

[38] Hermann Finck, Practica musica (Wittenberg, 1556). Liber quintus, De arte eleganter et suaviter cantandi.

/Example III-5 Horsley ex.7 - Hermann Finck from Practica musica, 1556 and ex.8 C. Maffei/[39]

Like Coclicus, Finck gives as examples only short melodic figures in simple and ornamented form, and common cadences with their florid versions. True to his convictions, he includes examples in clefs for all voices [ex. 7]. Also included is a motet with all four voices embellished. Only the ornamented form, however, is given. The ornaments pass from voice to voice, and imitative entrances usually have similar coloratura passages. Of all the voices the bass has the fewest fast-moving ornaments, the soprano the most. There are dissonances that are not treated according to the common practice of Renaissance style, as well as parallel perfect consonances. (The latter are also present in the ornamented version of the fuga given by Coclicus.) That these are not careless errors is shown by the fact that Finck admits their presence, stating that they occur only when their avoidance would result in an awkward vocal movement.

Engelke: Hermann Finck writes in *Practica musica* (1556):

Now I have a few words to say in defence of the Germans, who for many centuries have been considered to be totally unmusical by foreign people... I will only discuss the art of pleasant and elegant singing. In bygone times, foreign nations complimented themselves on being the only ones to master this art, completely excluding the Germans.[40]

Marunović, quoting Hermann Finck (*Practica Musica*, 1556):

The manner of applying coloraturas entirely depends on the skill... and peculiarities of the individual. Everyone has their own way. Many believe that the bass should be coloured, others, the soprano. My opinion is that all parts can and should be supplied with coloraturas; but not always and not in all parts simultaneously, but at suitable places so that one coloratura can be clearly and distinctly heard and differentiated from another, while the composition remains intact and undisturbed.

3.1.6 Giovanni Camillo Maffei da Solofra, *Discorso della Voce e del Modo, d'apparare di cantar Garganta*, 1562

Horsley: Among the letters of Camillo Maffei of Solofra (1562)[41] is a long letter to the "Illustrissimo Conte d'Alta Villa" which contains an excellent discussion of the principles of voice production, naturally including instructions for making florid embellishments upon polyphonic vocal music. For these embellishments Maffei uses the term *passaggio* - a term that becomes the usual designation for these added rapid scale passages in the Baroque period-but his *passaggi* differ not at all from the diminutions given by his contemporaries. Although the actual number of these *passaggi* is very small, the author gives definite rules for their application to a polyphonic vocal composition and includes a four-part madrigal with all voices ornamented to illustrate their proper use. The unornamented form of the madrigal is not given, but the placement of the passaggi can be clearly seen, as they consist mainly of *crome*[42] while the basic note values of the madrigal itself are obviously *semibreve* (whole note) and *minim* (half). (Ex. 8).

Maffei's rules may be briefly summarized as follows:

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[39] See Music Examples A. Ch. III-5 Horsley, ex.7 Finck and 8 Maffei.
[40] See more by Finck under 3.2.2 Negative or critical on ornamentation, p.26
[41] Gio. Camillo Maffei da Solofra, *Delle lettere del S. R. Gio. Camillo Maffei da Solofra*. Libri due. Dove tra gli altri bellissimi pensieri . . . Raccolti per Don Valerio de 'Paoli da Limosano (Naples, 1562).
[42] Eight note.

1.*Passaggi* should be used only at cadences, although some ornaments from one note to another (inserted within a definite melodic interval) may be used before arriving at the cadence. In his madrigal the cadence in each voice is embellished when the voices cadence at different times (Ex. 8b).

2.In one madrigal not more than four or five *passaggi* should be used, for the ear may become satiated with too much sweetness. Again, Maffei must mean this rule to apply only to the individual voices. In his example the soprano and alto each make six *passaggi*, the tenor four, and the bass five.

3.*Passaggi* should be made on the penultimate syllable of the word so that the end of the *passaggio* will coincide with the end of the word. This, however, is not always the case in his examples.

4.*Passaggi* sound best when made upon the vowel **o**. They are used predominantly on **o** in his examples, but are also found on other vowels.

5.In an ensemble of four or five soloists the *passaggi* must be made by each in turn. Otherwise, the harmony ceases to be clear.

While these rules give an insight into some of the problems faced in embellished solo performance, they cannot be taken as absolute. Since exceptions to them occur in the author's own examples, it is not to be expected that they would apply strictly to vocal ensemble performance everywhere.

Marunović: "This practice is first associated with countertenors, as commented on by Giovanni Camillo Maffei (...*Discorso della Voce e del Modo, d'apparare di cantar Garganta, senza maestro...,* 1562):

'There are voices that sing bass, tenor, and any other register with ease, and can execute the most beautiful ornaments at any pitch. Only such voices can successfully dedicate themselves to coloratura singing.'

3.1.7 G. Dalla Casa, *Il vero modo di diminuir ...*, Venice, 1584

Horsley: In 1584, Giralamo[43] dalla Casa published his manual entitled *Il vero modo di diminuir*[44] a book that marks the end of the purely Renaissance style of ornamentation. This manual includes a list of ornamentations of all the intervals of the scale within the time values of a semibreve and a minim. Here for the first time appear diminutions on the skips of the sixth, the seventh, and the octave, which may imply that these were becoming more common in written compositions.

/*Example III-6 Horsley ex.9: Girolamo dalla Casa, from Il vero modo di diminuir, 1584*/[45]

Each of these diminutions consists of notes of the same rhythmic denomination, and there is little variety in the melodic figures used. Instead of the long ornamented cadence patterns presented by the preceding authors, Dalla Casa gives examples of what he calls *tremoli groppizati* and *groppi battute* on ascending steps on both the semibreve and the minim (Ex. 9).

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[43] The author always writes his name as Giralamo ...

[44] Girolamo dalla Casa, *Il vero modo di diminuir, 1584, con tutte le sorte di stromenti di fiato e corde e di voce humana* (Venice, 1584). 2 vols.

[45] See Music Examples A. Ch. III-6 Horsley, ex.9 Dalla Casa 1

This is the first suggestion we find of the stereotyping and naming of ornamental patterns, a tendency that hints at the coming Baroque practice. It is especially significant that these appear in place of the cadence patterns heretofore listed in the manuals, since 17th-century usage came to regard the *groppo*, from which came our modern trill, as obligatory at the cadence.

Horsley further explains that although Dalla Casa does not provide specific rules for the application of his diminutions, he includes numerous examples of Italian madrigals and French chansons to which the diminutions are applied. Along with these ornaments, he presents compositions by well-known composers of the time, such as Palestrina, de Rore, Jannequin, and Lasso. By comparing these ornamented versions with the original compositions, readers can gain a clear idea of the musical results of this practice.

In his first examples of applied ornamentation, Dalla Casa uses crome, semicrome[46], *treplicate* (24 notes to a semibreve) and *quadruplicate* (biscrome)—these latter two appearing for the first time in his manual—in duple and triple divisions, each ornamental figure moving evenly in notes of the same denomination.

At the end he gives a few in which the note values are varied, and this he considers the true style of diminution. Even when the note values are mixed, however, each smaller figure consists of similar values. As in Maffei's examples, the basic contours of the composed lines are clearly preserved, the ornamentation being applied more obviously in that the regular rhythm and fast movement of the ornamental passages set them off from the composed line, which moves in slower and more varied time values. Nor are the words obscured, for the florid figures are used mainly on the long syllables.

Although most of Dalla Casa's examples of diminutions are made upon the soprano parts, he includes in his work a version of *Alla dolc´ombra* by Cipriano de Rore, in which all the voices are ornamented in turn.

Like Maffei, Dalla Casa does not discuss the suitability of this ornamentation of all voices, but takes its practice so much for granted that he includes a sample without any further explanation. A comparison of the original with Dalla Casa's ornamented version will show how greatly the general effect of the composition was changed in this type of solo performance (Ex. 10).

/*Example III-7 Horsley ex. 10 - Madrigal Alla dolc'ombra, Cipriano de Rore (ornamented version Girolamo dalla Casa)*/[47]

An interesting aspect of the example ... is the fact that when in the written version a section of the composition is repeated, the performers repeat it with different ornaments. At this time, as in later Baroque opera, the disguising of the structural elements of a composition rather than their emphasis was considered the earmark of a subtle and sophisticated performance.
In these diminutions by Dalla Casa we see the end of the purely Renaissance style of ornamentation. Manuals teaching the old style, manuals teaching the new style, and those containing a mixture of the two were all used simultaneously. In the new style of ornamentation, emotional expression was stressed. Vocal and instrumental practices became separated. Short ornamental patterns, used to stress certain notes in a phrase and accentuate their emotional effect, were introduced. The florid figures which had been used to spin out a line (*passaggi*) were retained, but they acquired a new musical character in keeping with the new style of composition. …

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[46] A sixteenth note.
[47] See Music Examples A. Ch. III-7 Horsley, ex.10 Rore - Dalla Casa 2.

The vocal application of this new ornamental practice became known in Italy as *gorgia* and it was in the Italian monodic style that it had its first expression. But, although this new type takes precedence in Baroque music, the *passaggi*, which are the continuation of the old principle of diminution, are retained in the improvised cadenzas and free improvised embellishments of all Baroque solo work in both instrumental and vocal performance.[48]

3.1.8 G.Bassano, *Ricercate, passaggi et cadentie ...*, Venice, 1585[49]

3.1.9 G.Bassano, *Motetti, madrigali et canzoni francesi ... diminuiti*, Venice, 1591[50]

Thomas: However, Ortiz is not the only useful source for late Renaissance divisions. Giovanni Bassano's print of 1591, though coming only a year before Riccardo Rognoni's very manneristic examples, contains some beautifully paced and elegant divisions, particularly those on chansons such as Lassus's "*Susanne un jour*" and Crécquillon's *"Un gay bergier"* and *"Oncques amour"*. They represent the high point of traditional Renaissance divisions, just before the turn to mannerism, and many of the texted pieces, while unspectacular in terms of the quantity of divisions, are perhaps especially useful precisely because they are not artificially elaborate, but are relatively close to the kind of thing a gifted performer of the time would have had, literally, at his fingertips. Particularly effective is Bassano's *bastarda* version of Rore's '*Ancor che col partire*', which uses both the bass and the tenor part, but is fully texted.

3.1.10 R. Rognoni, *Passaggi per potersi essercitare nel diminuire*, Venice, 1592[51]

3.1.11 L.Zacconi, *Prattica di musica*, Venice, 1592

Engelke, quotes the author:

Music is not renewed or changed by the notes, which always remain the same; but through embellishments or free graceful ornaments contributed by the singers it becomes increasingly beautiful... People with the dexterity and ability of performing with such an abundance of notes in the proper rhythm and in the necessary tempo have made our songs so attractive, and continue to do so. Consequentially, somebody who does not perform songs in this manner, will hardly satisfy the listeners and will be scorned by the singers. This ornamented way of singing is popularly called *Gorgia* — meaning nothing but the accumulation of quavers and semiquavers[52] within one part of a bar! Its nature makes it easier to learn all these quick notes by ear; when examples are written down, the exact measure of the free execution cannot be precisely expressed... Whoever wants to learn the *Gorgia* must take care to realize it as good as possible; if he cannot do this properly, he should rather omit it altogether! Every small mistake and blemish will spoil what could be beautiful, and instead of being pleasing and delightful, it will make the listener weary, disgusted and offended. The Cadenzas are the moments where a singer is especially invited to make *Fioriture* and *Passagi*.—Let me also mention the fact, that the *Tremolo* (what we call the trill), i.e. the trembling voice, is the real door leading to the *Passagi* and the mastery of the *Gorgia*.

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[48] Let us remember here what John Bass wrote about it, see Chapter 1, p.26.

[49] Giovanni Bassano, *Ricercate, pasaggi et Cadentie per potersi esercitar nel diminuir terminatamente con ogni sorte d'instrumento* (Venice 1585).

[50] Giovanni Bassano, *Mottetti, Madrigali et Canzoni francese di diversi eccelenti autori ....*

[51] Ricardo Rognoni, *Passaggi per potersi essercitare nel diminuire* (Venice, 1592), edited by Giuseppe Vecchi, foreword by Bruce Dickey (Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore, 2002), see Bass, Chapter 1, p.26.

[52] Eight and 16th notes.

(According to Chrysander's translation.)

Marunović, quoting the same author:

Lodovico Zacconi (*Prattica di Musica*, II, 1622):

- "Creating counterpoint for the sake of counterpoint is one thing, but creating it for ornamentation is another."

- "Unless the beginnings are entirely known, the starts of pieces should always be pronounced with simple *appoggiaturas*."

- "The beginning of a (polyphonic) vocal composition, where other parts are at rest, should not begin with ornamentation... (...) Thus, initial passages, unless they are in homophonic style, should always be presented simply and clearly so that the entry of each part can be better heard."

- "Places... that particularly call for the introduction of *fioritura* [florid passages] are cadences."

- "Seamlessness and beauty rest on meter and tempo... this is the greatest difficulty in ornamentation. (...) Moreover, a singer who uses minimal ornamentation in the right timing will always be more appreciated than one who strays too far, regardless of whether it is done in the right timing or not."

3.1.12 G.L.Conforti, *Breve et facile maniera ... a far passaggi*, Rim, 1593[53]

3.1.13 G.Diruta, *Il transilvano*, Venice, 1593

Engelke: *Il Transilvano* (1593) by G. Diruta has the same outstanding significance for organ players, as Zacconi's work has for singers.

Diruta makes the distinction between five kinds of diminution: 1 *Minuta* (M); 2 *Groppo* (G); 3 *Tremolo* (T); 4 *Accenti* (A); and 5 *Clamationi* (C). The *Minuta* is a group figuration filling out the whole phrase; the other ones are self-explanatory through the following musical example, a Canzona by Mortaro with Diruta's diminutions:

/*Example III-8 Engelke, ex.5 Canzone d'Antonio Mortaro with the diminution of A. Gabrieli (1596), The same canzone with diminutions from Diruta*[54] *(1609)./*

3.2.14 G.B.Bovicelli, *Regole, passaggi di musica, madrigali e motetti passeggiati*, Venice, 1594[55]

Engelke: Bovicelli accepts, according to contemporary taste, in his *Regole, Passagi* etc. (1594) sliding from a lower note upwards and prefers irregular series of notes, e.g. dotted rhythms, to regular ones. He is also well acquainted with the virtuoso's trick of lingering on the first note of a

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[53] On the titlepage one lira da braccio is depicted; see in Appendix under 8.5 All pictures.
[54] See Music Examples A. Ch. III-8 Engelke, ex.5, Mortaro – Gabrieli, Diruta.
[55] Giovanni Battista Bovicelli, *Regole, passaggi di musica, madrigali e motetti passeggiati* (Rules, passages of music, madrigals, and motetti passeggiati, Venice, 1594), edited by Nanie Bridgman, *Documenta Musicologica* 12 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1957). Also Giovanni Battista Bovicelli, Regole, passaggi di musica, madrigali et motettipasggiati (Venice, 1594), in Late Renaissance Singing, ed. and trans. Edward Foreman (Minneapolis: Pro Musica Press, 2001), 119-212. See Bass, Chapter 1.

run (*Tirade*), in order to later add impetus to the passage through increasing speed. Furthermore, he demands strict adherence to the given measure and only allows a *ritardando* at the end of turns (*Groppetti*) and cadenzas.

A. Smith: This is corroborated by Bovicelli in his treatise *Regole, passaggi di musica…* (Venice, 1594) when he writes the following for singers:

> In order not to always, as the proverb says, frequently repeat the same tune /*cantilena*/ to the great boredom of those who listen, it is a very great ornament to vary it often, yes, with passages of the same notes, but divided in diverse ways. Just as in writing or speaking the greatest boredom for those who listen or read comes if the oration is without any colour of /<u>rhetorical</u>/ figures—it becomes wearisome on its own accord: so it is with the ornamental passages in singing if they are not [sung] in diverse ways—as it were with ravishing colours—which instead of /bringing/ delight bring disgust. I want to say that the passages at times have to be in stepwise motion and of a single /note/ value; and at another time the same notes /have to be/ in a different variated manner, so that although they are the self-same notes, they nonetheless appear to be different because of the different way of presenting them.

Marunović: Bovicelli (*Regole, passaggi...*) considered it a mistake that many "...start furiously doing *passaggi* right from the beginning and from the first note."

Letter from Luigi Zenobi, end of the 16th century[56]

A.Smith:

Zenobi then waxes full when he comes to describing the obligations of the soprano:

> There remains the soprano, which is truly the ornament of all other parts, just as the bass is the foundation. To give pleasure to the listener he must meet these chief requirements: he must have either a natural or boy like soprano without nasal effect, without such habits as tossing his head, contorting his shoulders, rolling his eyes, moving his jaw, his chin, and his whole body; he must go high and low with even timbre and not have one register in the high range and another one in the low. He must be expert in counterpoint, for without that he sings haphazardly and commits a thousand blunders; while singing he must make the words distinctly understood and not drown them in passage-work nor cover them with excessive vocal resonance, whether ringing, hoarse, or crude; he must have a *groppo granito* (articulated trill) and a *groppo posato* (calm, sedate trill)]. A *groppo granito* is one that touches two notes like *sol* and *fa*, or *la* and *sol*, in detached semi-quavers and a *groppo posato* is one that consists of simple quavers, also touching the two notes clearly. A trillo is that [ornament] that stops neither on the line nor in the space [but always moves] with velocity; *tremolo* is that /embellishment/ that touches /notes/ on the line and in the space in whatever manner one may wish to execute it.

Thus in contrast to the restrictions placed on the lower voices, it is demanded of the soprano that he embellish his part and thus adorn the whole composition "with art, with grace, and with good taste."

More by Zenobi on rhetorical skills demanded of a soprano etc., see by Smith in Chapter 2, p.33.

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[56] Luigi Zenobi, letter, see Smith, Chapter 2., p.32

[Smith] Many aspects of Zenobi's list of prerequisites are very striking. One prime example of this is the clear distinction between essential graces and freely improvised passage-work or diminutions, a differentiation that is accepted for the the 17th and 18th centuries, but largely overlooked for the performance practice of the 16th century in spite of the excellent introductory works on the subject by Howard Mayer Brown and Bruce Dickey.[57] For the most part one hears either "pure" performances with vocal or instrumental consorts or instrumental versions of vocal pieces, full of diminutions and destined to show off the skill and dexterity of the musician. This is perhaps a reflection of the sources we have for ornamentation. For diminutions we have tutors that not only include exercises about how to fill in intervals but also complete ornamentations for individual works that serve as illustrations of how these small snippets may be connected together in improvisation. This makes it relatively easy for us today; we can just play the diminutions as if they were written works, instead of taking the challenge of learning to improvise embellishments. For the graces, however, the sources often inform us about how they are to be executed, but not where they are to be applied, or we know where a grace is to be played as it is marked in the music, but are often unsure about how we should perform it.

The fact that the graces were part and parcel of the conventional training of musicians is demonstrated not only by Zenobi's writing, but can be seen in both the musical and theoretical works throughout the century. Although each instrument cultivated its own sort of essential graces that took the characteristics of the instrument into account, most can be seen in some way to refer back to the voice. Ganassi is particularly articulate in this regard, stating that the true art of performance (on the recorder) consists of imitation (of the human voice), *prontezza* (promptness, quickness in relation to breathing), and *galanteria* (grace). In imitating the voice, one was required to have ability to quickly and immediately alter the flow of the air, so as to vary expression from tender to lively. The graces (in Ganassi's case various types of trills) further enhanced the emotional impact of the music.

3.1.15 A.Virgiliano *Il Dolcimelo*, manuscript, c.1600

3.1.16 G.Caccini, *Le nuove musiche*, Florence, 1601

Smith: Giulio Caccini shared Zenobi's and Vicentino's sentiments that the affect of the music was all too often disregarded in performance when he writes in his introduction to *Le nuove musiche* of 1602 that

> long windings and turnings of the voice /in diminution/ are ill-used; for /he has/ observed that divisions have been invented, not because they are necessary unto a good fashion of singing, but rather for a certain tickling of the ears of those who do not well understand what it is to sing passionately; for if they did, undoubtedly divisions would have been abhorred, there being nothing more contrary to passion than they are.[58]

He later goes on to say that these divisions should be used sparingly and only when the words require it. Then, as now, the performer was faced with the task of finding the optimal solution by which he could move the audience, show his technical prowess, and do justice to the piece of music. And then as now every musician had to establish his own personal priorities for each individual performance, weighing up the various factors, much as Zenobi did.

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[57] Howard Mayer Brown, *Embellishing Sixteenth-Century Music*, Early Music Series 1, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976) and Bruce Dickey, "Ornamentation in Sixteenth-Century Music," in *A Performer's Guide to Renaissance Music*, ed. by Jeffery Kite-Powell, 2nd ed., (Bloomington: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

[58] See also latter in this chapter under 3.2.2 Negative or critical on ornamentation (and improvisation), from p.26.

Marunović, quoting Giulio Caccini (*Nuove musiche*, preface, 1601):

"...yet, in less passionate and less affective kinds of music, and on long rather than short notes, and in final cadences, shorter diminutions can be used... Long passages (*lunghi giri*) I have applied only to long notes and in cadences."

3.1.17 P.Cerone, El Melopeo y Maestro, Naples, 1613[59]

Engelke, Calvisius (*Kallwitz*) in *Biciniorum libri duo* (1612):

"Colorature should ornate the singing, they must not sound like neighing, sighing or wailing. It must be stated, especially for the boys' benefit, that the first and the last note of the colorature must be identical with the embellished note, so as not to create a faulty progression. In parts fundamental to others, embellishments must be used with moderation. The context of the musical setting and the sense of the words often call for acceleration or deceleration of the tempo."

Engelke, D. Friderici emphasizes in *Musica figuralis* (1614) the importance of variable tempo in performance:

"Not just one regular beat should be felt in singing. Rather, the measure should be chosen according to the words of the text. They may require now one tactus, now another one."

3.1.18 M.Praetorius, *Syntagma Musicum*, (1st edition Wittemberg 1614/15, 2nd and 3rd Wolfenbüttel 1619)

Engelke: The most exhaustive information on contemporary musical practice is given by Praetorius in his *Syntagma musicum* (1614 -1620). In chapter IX he writes:

"How to inform and teach boys with a strong desire and love for singing on the current Italian manner:

It is not only the task of a speaker (*Orator*) to ornate a speech (*Oratio*) with beautiful, graceful and lively words and with delicious metaphors, but also to pronounce them correctly and to move emotions: this he achieves by raising or lowering the voice, by now using a powerful but tender voice, by now talking with the full might of his throat. Equally, the task of a musician is not just to sing, but to sing artfully and with grace, in order to touch the listener's heart, to move his emotions; only in this way will singing have fulfilled its purpose. Indeed, a singer must not only be gifted by nature with a marvellous voice, but also with good intelligence, and he must be perfectly experienced in the science of music: He must know how to use accents agreeably and as indicated; he must not apply *moduli* or *colorature* (called *passagi* by the Italians) at all places in a song, but only with moderation and at the right moment. His listener will then not only appreciate the loveliness of his voice, but also his artistic skill. …

It is absolutely necessary for all singers from the earliest years to practice and get acquainted with voice production and articulate pronunciation:

2. *Natura*: In the first place, a singer must have a naturally beautiful voice. It must be vibrating and trembling, but with great moderation, not like what we are accustomed to from

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[59] See under 3.2.2. Negative about ornamentation / Marunović, p. 26.

certain schools. He also needs an agile throat for diminutions. Secondly, he requires the ability to hold his breath for a long time without respiration. Thirdly, he should choose his register as *Cantus, Altus, Tenor* etc. and fulfil his part with full and clear sound without using *falsetto*, i.e. a half or a forced voice.

Here, we must also remember *Intonatio* and *Exclamatio*:

Intonatio: *Intonatio* means the way of starting a song. Different opinions prevail on this. Some want the start to be on the right note, some prefer the second below, with the voice gradually ascending and getting louder. Some opt for the third, some for the fourth; and some start with a graceful and hushed voice. All these different ways are collected under the term *Accentus*.

Exclamatio: Exclamatio is the right way to move emotions by raising the voice.

Marunović:

The specific Italian style of vocal ornamentation was introduced to Germany through Praetorius (*Syntagma musicum*, 1614-20), somewhat later through Herbst (1642/1650?) and Crüger (1660). Praetorius speaks of the 'new Italian singing style' ('*Newe Italienische Manier im Singen*'), singing which, according to Caccini's postulates, involves prudent and thoughtful improvisation of ornaments, coloraturas, and small, short ornaments such as trills. Praetorius's spiritual concerts from the collection *Polyhymnia caduceatrix* (1619) directly reflect the Italian style of ornamentation. They were published in two versions, simple (*simplex*) and diminished (*diminutum*), which Praetorius intended to emphasize the advantage of simple diminution.

3.1.19 F.Rognoni, *Selva de varii passaggi ...*, Milano, 1620[60]

3.1.20 C.Monteverdi:

Engelke, Claudio Monteverdi expresses himself 1624 as follows:

"Musicians, especially the ones playing the basso continuo, first found the striking of a chord 16 times in one bar to be absolutely ridiculous; so, they only played the note once, thereby destroying the whole imitation of the passionate text. Therefore, one should strive to play the basso continuo with all its accompaniments as written, and also to follow the remaining indications precisely." (According to Emil Vogel's translation.)

3.1.21 G.Battista Spadi da Faenza, *Libro de passaggi ascendenti et descendenti*, Venice, 1624

3.1.22 Giovanni Battista Doni, *Trattato della musica scenica*, c.1635 .:

Marunović:

"…if ornamentations of all kinds are allowed anywhere, it would certainly be (contrary to general opinion) in theatres, where all kinds of people gather and the uneducated are always in greater numbers than the intelligent; they (ornaments) are better suited to theatrical music than any other kind. Similarly, in places where quite refined music is sung… and in gatherings of people who understand music, they should not be used abundantly but sparingly."

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[60] Son of Riccardo (Taeggio) Rognoni.

3.1.23 M.Mersenne, *Harmonie universelle*, Paris, 1636

Marunović:

Marin Mersenne (*De l' art d'embellir la voix, les recits, les airs ou les chants*, in: *Harmonie Universelle*, 1636.) testifies to the new specifically Italian expressive means of early monody and the difference between Italian and French vocal performance:

> "I believe ... that teachers should travel to foreign countries, especially Italy, where they boast good singing and considerably better musical knowledge than the French. Although not everything they (Italians) do can be praised, it is quite certain that they possess something excellent in their performance, that they grasp much more powerfully than our singers who excel themselves in trivialities but not in expressive power… However, our singers imagine that the exclamations and accents used by Italians carry too much tragedy and comedy within them. Therefore, they do not want to use the same, even though it would be good and excellent… to imitate."

The Italian style of ornamentation greatly influenced the French *air de cour*, which enjoyed particular popularity during the time of Louis XIII (1612-1643). Among the new Italian expressive means adopted during the 1620s and 1630s, particular popularity was enjoyed by the *accento* (*appoggiatura*), Mersenne's *port de la voix*:

> "… *'Port de la voix*,' which makes arias and recitatives extremely pleasant, must be learned. … However, this projection of the voice is not given in printed books; it can be done by dotting the note with which one starts and then adding a quarter note, eighth note, or sixteenth note, which means that the previous note is just slightly touched so that the next note starts (immediately)."

3.2 Other sources:

In addition to all the treatises mentioned in the list and discussed in more detail, manuals for mastering diminution, ornamentation - some elementary (sub-) type of improvisation, there are other sources from the late 15th to the beginning of the 17th century, from which we can learn and understand how really looked or sounded average performance of Renaissance music. In his article **B.Thomas** lists them in the following order:

> 1.Petrucci's *Frottole libro sexto* (1505), contains a few decorated pieces, in one case, "Aime sospiri"[61], a version of a piece that has survived undecorated.
> 2.British Library, Royal Appendix 74-6 contains some decorated pavans (some for lost pieces, some for pieces elsewhere in the manuscript). A useful example is a piece called the "Pavan of Albart", which is a simply but nicely decorated version of a popular French *pavane*, "Si je m'en vois".
>
> 3.Other dance sources included divisions, notably Praetorius's *Terpsichore*, which ends with four pieces called *Reprisen*, in which sequences of four-bar sections in a slow galliard rhythm are decorated in the top part. As well as these rather substantial examples, *Terpsichore* contains a handful of other pieces with divisions, scattered through the collection. Pieces with simple divisions occur in the books of Susato, Phalèse, Mainerio and others, and also Antonio Brunelli's *Scherzi, arie e canzonette* of 1616.

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[61] See on this piece in the Chapter 6 and 7 and in Music Examples for it.

4.Certain ricercars in the Italian collection *Musica nova* of 1540 have few cadential and other flourishes which are not in themselves particularly significant or original, but which are special simply because they appear in a normal context, and are not part of some didactic work.

It seems clear that, given the ability to distinguish decoration from basic progression, one will find little examples in many different places, albeit very widely scattered. Perhaps the problem is that present-day musicians are not necessarily trained to make the above distinction, but only to play the notes put in front of them. What is required is a practical, analytical approach to the music, an ability to spot and assimilate examples that can be used effectively.

Lute and keyboard music

A rich source of ornamentation of all kinds - if one knows what to do with it - is tablature, both for fretted instruments, and for keyboard. Obviously tablature, which in its purest form is a set of instructions about where the player puts his fingers, relates much more directly to actual perfor-mance than does mensural notation; so it is not surprising to find that written-out divisions are much more common in lute and keyboard music than in music written in parts.

The lute-player today is in a unique position compared to his colleagues playing wind and bowed instruments. He has a large repertory in which melodic ornamentation is often completely integrated into the music, though there is much evidence to suggest that additional graces such as mordents and short trills, were assumed at times. He even has division parts designed for ensemble use, as in the solo lute parts of the English mixed consort repertory, and there are many examples in music for two or more lutes of single-line divisions of a contrapuntal kind, as in the "*La Spagna*" settings in the Siena lute book.

The keyboard-player is not so well off, especially as far as music before around 1580 is concerned. Of course, the whole English virginal repertory abounds with elegant ornamentation, as a typical Pavan with repeats will show. Again, however, we get the feeling that this repertory is the tip of an iceberg, the climax of a long development. Much of the ornamentation in this repertory sounds quite ridiculous when applied to other instruments.

Ornamentation and harmonic rhythm

Many surviving lute and keyboard pieces with divisions are based on quite slow-moving harmonies, sometimes in the form of regular changes every three or four beats, as in the *passamezzo antico, passamezzo moderno* and other ground bass patterns. It is striking that in such pieces the diminutions are less inclined to follow normal rules about dissonance than in other intabulations. It seems clear that the ear tolerates irregularities much more easily when the harmonies are very clear and predictable. We can see this in many of the cadential divisions found in the diminution manuals, and they are often much freer than the interval divisions, for a similar reason: Renaissance cadences are stereotyped, and because the ear does not have to learn anything new, it can cope with a somewhat wild-sounding division.[62]

Ornament and climax

The best examples of decorated pieces usually conform to the general aesthetic that underlies much abstract instrumental music (and a great deal of vocal music) of the Renaissance, by which the pacing is carefully controlled. Bassano's outstanding versions of chansons such as *Un gay*

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[62] More about that, with some music examples in the Appendix, see in Chapter 5. How to Improvise Renaissance Music, with Voice and Instruments under Thorn, p.15.

*bergier', 'Susanne un jour '*and so on, fastidiously control the degree of rhythmic excitement: each phrase of the song has slightly more ornamentation than its predecessor, leading to an impressive roulade at the end. This is exactly what the theorist Zacconi advises when discussing diminutions. However, this principle of progression works on two levels; that of the piece as a whole, and that of the individual phrase, in which again the greatest amount of ornamentation should come at the cadence. This sounds like common sense, but in my experience it takes musicians of today quite a long time to acquire a sense of this structural aspect, presumably because they are brought up to assume that structure is entirely the responsibility of the composer.

Ornament and personal style

The use of divisions brings up a paradox in the revival of early music. All the use of historical evidence almost presupposes that the whole function of the player today is to reconstruct, to get as close to what musicians *then* would have done. And yet the best musicians of the time, while working within a clearly understood tradition, would have each had their own personal style, just as the best jazz and rock performers have today. I would argue that even when engaged in the somewhat artificial process of trying to reconstruct diminution practice at this distance in time, the development of a personal style should be regarded as a positive help, provided the performer does not become locked into it, and that the style continues to develop.

3.2.1.*"Alla bastarda"*:[63]

Thomas: *bastarda* style

Most [music] also has a few examples of decorated high sections, or in some cases music for the *viola bastarda*, which represents the culmination of the whole development. ......

The complete pieces selected by the authors of these treatises were not works of their own generation, but works from at least two generations before: a small group of Franco-Flemish chansons from the 1540s and madrigals from Cipriano de Rore's first book, probably composed at about the same time. collections. This trend continued until the *bastarda* violin edition of Vincenzo Bonizzi in 1626, which contained "unheard of" extreme versions of music - up to a hundred years old (Sandrin's 'Douce memoire').[64]…

This is an endlessly fascinating subject, which I cannot take very far here. It was associated particularly with the viol, but there are examples for the human voice, for

/Example III-9 Thomas ex.2 - Diego Ortiz, Recercada 'Doulce memoire'/[65]

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[63] The *viola bastarda* is a bass string instrument from the 16th and 17th centuries, similar to the viola da gamba, but with an elongated body. The term is first mentioned in a treatise by Girolamo Dalla Casa from 1584. The work of Francesco Rognoni, *Selva de varii passaggi* (Milan 1620) contains several pieces for *viola bastarda*.

Composer, organist and music theorist Michael Praetorius, in his Syntagma musicum, justifies the versatility of the *viola bastarda* by likening it to a "bastard of all voices." He explains that the instrument is not limited to one voice but can masterfully handle various musical styles, including madrigals, fugues, and harmonies across different registers. Praetorius describes how the *viola bastarda* navigates through different voices, adding embellishments and jumps to achieve clarity in fugues and cadences. He outlines five tuning modes for the *viola bastarda*: 'D (' C) - G - c - e - a - d ',' A - E (D) - A - d - a - d ',' A - D - G - d - a - d '. Some authors, like A. Otterstedt, suggest that the *bastarda* may have had additional sympathetic strings similar to those found on the later *viola d'amore*.

[64] *Alcune opere di diverse auttori a diverse voci, passaggiate principalmente per la viola bastarda* (1626)

[65] Se See Music Examples A. Ch. III-9 Thomas ex.2. Ortiz.

the violin, and even one for the trombone. Basically, it is a style of arrangement in which a solo performer does not simply take a *cantus* or *bassus* part and decorates that, but rather moves from part to part, and even goes into the fifth-part mode found in Ortiz (see ex. 2), and at times into extremely virtuoso runs across the whole range of the instrument: to accommodate the aspirations of *bastarda* players, new ways of tuning the viol were devised, taking the bottom string down a fourth.

A great deal of musical invention went into the best *bastarda* pieces, and it is clear that it was in this music that the Renaissance and mannerist traditions reached their highest point. The difficulty in reviving it is that much of the subtlety of this music - however impressive it may sound technically - is lost if the listener does not have some working knowledge of the model.

Dalla Casa, supposedly a virtuoso *cornetto* player, arranged ten pieces for *viola bastarda.*

Marunović:

"The process of diminution treatment of a madrigal or chanson for the *viola bastarda* is explicitly commented on by Michael Praetorius (Syntagma musicum, III, 1619.), considering that a good player from *res factae* takes 'now from the soprano, now from the bass, now in the middle from the tenor and alto' what he needs and then embellishes it with 'leaps and diminutions.'"

3.2.2 Negative or critical on ornamentation (and improvisation):

Beside already given quotes by Bovicelli, Zenobi, Caccini, Calvisious, Monteverdi and Mersenne, here are some more explicit ones:

Marunović:

Hence the emergence of vocal virtuosity that will evolve into Baroque bravura, but also increasingly uncontrolled improvisation of ornaments, as already indicated by J. Tinctoris.):

> "...and sometimes ... (singers, op. D. M.) depart so far from the counterpoint contained in the composition that they do not satisfy only connoisseurs but also laymen in any way."

Horsley: There is disagreement among music scholars today (1950) over the question of whether ornamentation should be applied to the performance of Renaissance music in order for it to be authentic. ......

On the other hand, Zarlino, who was a contemporary of Dalla Casa in Venice, disapproved of those who added anything to a composition when they performed it.[66] Vicentino, another outstanding 16th-century theorist, approves of diminutions only when used in compositions of more than four parts—since the fifth part can fill in any harmony note which the diminution might pass by too quickly—or when the parts are played as written on instruments and the diminutions made only by the singers.[67] He also warns against the use of diminutions in sad music such as lamentations, because their fast movement destroys the mood of the music by making it sound happy.
Finck and Coclicus were both composers and teachers, and both approved heartily of coloratura performance of compositions. Zacconi, writing later in the century, admits that many composers avoid having their works performed by coloratura performers because they prefer to hear what

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[66] Gioseffo Zarlino, *Le istitutioni harmoniche* (Venice, 1558).
[67] See also A. Smith, in Chapter 2.

they themselves have written. Dr. Alfred Einstein states that "the more the madrigal becomes expressive in detail, the more this mechanical ornamentation becomes destructive."

Certainly it is true that as composers became more concerned with the subjective expression shown in their works they were more careful to write in all the details, thereby leaving less freedom to the performer. …

From the numerous attempts of theorists to curb their use, it is evident that the performers often used them too freely. ....

> **Ortiz:** The third way is one in which the player leaves the song and plays "by ear," a method he finds despicable because it distorts the original.

> 'This (deviation from composition) is the custom of those who want to demonstrate whatever skill they have but at the wrong time and without rhythm move away from the composition eventually reaching cadence or tones familiar to them. This is an undesirable process since it deviates from the composition, which is why it cannot be perfected.

Smith quoting Vicentino:

> There are some singers, however who display to listeners scant judgment and consideration in their singing, for when they come upon a sad passage they sing it joyfully and, conversely, when the passage is joyful they sing it sadly. Such persons are advised that diminutions made in the proper places and in tempo will seem good.

> Moreover, such diminutions should be used in /works for/ more than four voices, because diminution always causes the loss of numerous consonances and the burden of many dissonances.

Engelke, quotes from Finck:

> "Suffice it to remember that coloraturas in choirs cannot be inserted without discordance: when one part is sung by several people, coloraturas will always be different, which will veil the charm and the essence of the tone.

> Do not fill a cadenza unknown to you with mixed coloraturas, unless you are sure no discordant sounds, like fifths, octaves or open fourths, will result. Some singers who produce throat coloraturas not unlike the bleat of a goat make no inconsiderable mistake, as the result is not loveliness or characteristic coloratura, but clattering and uncultivated, unshaped sound...

> Furthermore, no voice should cover the other or disturb it through screaming. Descant and treble should not be written too high; no voice should be strained in a way that some singers change their complexion, get black faces and seem to run out of breath, or that the basses rumble like a hornet locked in a boot or snort like burst bellows."

Horsley, on the rules by C. Maffei, see p.14 in this chapter.

Marunović: Bovicelli in *Regole, passaggi* ... considered it a mistake that many '... from the beginning of singing and from the first note start angrily doing *passaggi*'

Smith: (L.Zenobi, late 16th c.:)

The soprano, then, has the obligation and complete freedom to improvise diminutions, to indulge in playfulness, and in a word, to ornament a musical body. But unless this is done with art, with grace, and with good taste, it is annoying to hear, hard to digest, and loathsome to endure.

Pietro Cerone (El Melopeo y Maestro ..., 1613):

'Decorating everyone at the same time seems ... like the sound of geese.'

Engelke (M.Praetorius, *Syntagma Musicum*):

No praise should be given to singers, to whom God has given a naturally lovely, trembling, vibrating and soaring voice and whose round throat is suitable for diminutions, if they do not abide with the laws of music, but continue to apply much too many colorature; this way they overstep the limits prescribed in singing, thereby spoiling and obscuring it to the extent that nobody can recognize what they are singing, and that it becomes impossible to hear, let alone comprehend, the words and notes set by the composer, who fills the song with beauty and grace.

B.Thomas:[68]

Much of the decoration in this repertoire (for lute and type) sounds rather ridiculous when applied to other instruments. .....

3.2.3 Timothy McGee: Ornamentation[69]

The ornaments

Ornamentation is the technique of embellishing a given melodic line. It can be as simple as adding a mordent or filling in a melodic third, or as elaborate as a running passage of many bars. There are two basic types of ornaments - those which decorate a single note, and the longer passages which fill in between notes. For convenience I shall borrow Brown's terminology[70] and refer to the first kind as *graces* and the second as *passaggi*. Both types were apparently used and intermixed throughout the early centuries. Most of the surviving evidence, however, is of *passaggi*, both in the examples and in the instructional material. But although the *graces* are less frequently written into the music and receive a more cursory treatment in the manuals, there is reason to believe that they were just as commonly used. They are mentioned by a number of writers, but few examples are given. From the references we can conclude that *graces* were considered the easiest type of ornament to use but were difficult to write out, and the advice to beginners was to listen to the way they were performed by accomplished artists. The Spanish composer Juan Bermudo (1555) permits only *graces*, and Brown believes that *graces* may have been the most common type of ornament in use. This includes mordents, turns, trills, and vibrato.

As with other subjects treated in this study, the specific instructional material comes mostly from the late Renaissance; we have ever-increasing amounts of information concerning the style and technique of ornamentation beginning in the early sixteenth century. For the earlier period, where only a few theoretical statements are found, it will be necessary to abstract most of the information from the music itself and to attempt to organize it into what appear to be basic

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[68] *Companion to Medieval & Renaissance Music*, ed .: T. Knighton and D. Fallows, J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd, London 1992.
[69] McGee, T.J.: *Medieval and Renaissance Music, ...*
[70] Brown, H.M.: *Embellishing Sixteenth-century Music, …*

principles. Fortunately, we can learn something of the earlier tradition by comparing variant versions of certain compositions and observing the ornamental passages written occasionally into works by composers. There are also a few examples of actual ornamentation written out for a variety of reasons, and by assembling all this information we can form a picture, albeit a somewhat hazy and uneven one, of the tradition of ornamentation throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

Ex.III-10, McGee ex.7.1a/ Appoggiatura with trill; b/ appoggiatura with mordent, Ex.7.2 Simple passaggi and ex.7.3 Cadence ornaments found in the repertory which can be transposed to any pitch: a/ found only in fourteenth- and fiitcenth-century music; b/ found only in sixteenth-century music; cl common to all centuries /[71]

Graces

McGee continues saying that:

> ornaments to a single note could be simply a single quick 'finger-wiggle 'or something more complicated such as a delicate turn. Examples in the instructional material and examples found there show a variety of types and suggest that most of them had been in common use for some time. We can conclude that the *graces* themselves were common to all periods and that the variety used in any given period depended mostly on the imagination of the performer.

> The *graces* are mostly of a type that involve the use of a neighbouring note. They include (in modern terms): *mordent* (upper or lower neighbour); *turn* (upper and lower neighbour); *appoggiatura* (entering on the neighbouring note, either from above or below); *trill* (including intervals of half-step, whole-step, and third); and *vibrato* (pitch variation of less than a half-step). The *graces* can be also combined - for example, after an *appoggiatura* could follow a *trill* or a *mordent*, as in example 7.1a and b.

Passaggi

The simplest *passaggi* are those used to connect the notes of a melodic line. They can be a direct filling-in of an interval, as in example 7.2a and b, or something a bit more adventurous, as in example 7.2c, or of a more extended length, as will be seen in many of the examples to follow. Variations of *passaggi* are limitless and involve not only length and note patterns but also a variety of rhythms; examples of this variety abound in the sixteenth-century manuals. The individual style changes for the *passaggi* are better documented than those for the *graces*, and we will find ourselves on more secure ground when attempting to determine the placement and quantity of *passaggi* in the various styles.

Cadence Formulae

A *cadence formula* is not an ornament per se but a particular set of *graces, passaggi*, and combinations of them that was used almost 'pro forma 'at the end of a phrase, section, or composition. Example 7.3 is a compilation of a number of comparatively simple *cadence formulae* found frequently in the repertory.

The Earlier Centuries

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[71] See Music Examples A. Ch. III-10 McGee ex.7.1 to 7.3.

For the years before 1350 there is very little concrete evidence for the kinds of ornaments that were added to music. We know from the writings of this period that embellishment was practised, and indeed we would come to that conclusion from what is known of the later centuries.

The earliest theoretical statement on this subject comes at the end of the thirteenth century from Jerome of Moravia, who discussed both *graces* and *passaggi*. He referred to ornaments as 'harmonic flowers' and said that they must be used to grace music. The descriptions are not clear, but he seems to be referring to short *passaggi* for the purpose of filling in intervals, a 'swift and stormlike 'vibration that is probably a vocal flutter, and trills that can be fast or slow, long or short, steady or increasing in speed towards the end. He illustrated only an upper-neighbour trill, explaining that on an organ it is executed in a special way, by holding the principal note and striking the note above it. Ornaments were to be placed on the longer notes of a phrase rather than on the subdivisions.

Additional help in establishing early ornamentation practices can be obtained by comparing variant readings of compositions. This evidence shows the freedom taken in the transmission of melodies, a concept that is the basis of ornamentation. By noticing the type and placement of subdivisions in different readings of compositions we can form some ideas about what melodic figures were used in subdivisions and where they were placed. …

When this is put together with Jerome's description of *passaggi* and graces, we can see that ornamentation was an ever-present element in performance throughout the early centuries. Fewer facts are available on practice before 1350, but the following principles on ornamentation can be established.[72]

The Late Middle Ages

We can begin with some of the earliest known examples of written-out ornamentation: the Robertsbridge Codex from England, written about 1370 and the Faenza Codex from Italy, written about 1420. In both sources vocal music has been ornamented for instrumental performance, perhaps keyboard. By comparing the instrumental versions with their vocal originals we can arrive at some idea of the nature of instrumental ornamentation in those two countries at that time.[73] …

This gives us some idea of the application of ornaments in instrumental music in these two countries at the end of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth. Unfortunately, there are no surviving manuscripts which so clearly present ornamented versions for singers, but some idea of vocal ornamentation can be extracted from variant versions of the same composition and from passages which suggest that the composer may have written ornaments into the piece. The clearest of the examples are Italian …

The variant readings of fourteenth-century madrigals demonstrate much the same type of ornamentation seen in the instrumental examples. …

To summarize the style of ornaments found in vocal music between 1350 and 1450, we can see that in the countries where evidence survives ornaments are applied mostly to long notes and to passages without text. Ornaments are found in texted passages, but they are less frequent and of the shorter variety. There are individual style differences. In Italy there are some examples of

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[72] For various rules see in the Appendix/ Various Lists
[73] See also latter in this Chapter by Mattes, p.36. and by Mariani, p.43.

long rapid *passages* and a large quantity of ornaments similar to the instrumental style; ornaments are applied only to the top voice. In England and France the use of ornamental passages is much more conservative. All ornaments are comparatively short in duration and are applied nearer the end than the beginning of the phrase, especially (but not exclusively) to the penultimate syllable in a phrase. Some short duration ornaments are applied to the tenor, and occasionally some are applied to the contratenor.

<center>**The end of the fifteenth century**</center>

The evidence we have for the period from about 1450 to 1525 is that the practices of ornamentation already noted above continued with few real changes. This can be seen in examples 7.12b, 7.13b, and 7.14, which include two keyboard intabulations, one from the *Buxheimer Orgelbuch* of about 1460 and the other from the Kotter keyboard manuscript of about 1530, and two instrumental elaborations of a chanson melody of about 1500 by Alexander Agricola. Both keyboard examples are from German sources, and Agricola was a Flemish composer who spent much of his time in Italy.

Examples 7.12b and 7.13b are typical of the style of intabulations found in the two German sources. and the style of embellishment is approximately the same for all compositions. There are no examples as fully ornamented as in the most involved Italian style seen in the Faenza manuscript, but the principles for the application of ornaments appear to be much the same as in the earliest intabulations. The kinds of ornaments used are both *graces* (or, rather, decorations to a single note) and *passaggi*, but there are fewer *graces*. The passages are smoother and tend to be mostly in duple division. In addition to the written-out graces, in *Buxheimer* we have the earliest known example of graces indicated by symbols: see example 7.12b, bars 1 and 2. Their absence from Kotter or any other manuscript does not, of course, necessarily indicate that *graces* were not used, as has been discussed above.

The music of Alexander Agricola is somewhat unusual in that almost all of it is highly ornate. Only a handful of composers from that time furnish us with compositions that appear to be already embellished. We will probably never know to what extent Agricola's passages resemble the extemporized ornaments of his era, but the degree to which they fit in with the other information we have suggests that they are probably not extreme or unusual, and his music does offer us at least one composer's ideas from an era that is otherwise poorly documented.

Ex. III-11 McGee ex.7.12 John Dunstable 'O rosa bella,' bars 1-5: a/ vocal original; b/ intabulation from Buxheimer MS and ex.7.13 Heinrich Isaac 'La Martinella,' bars 1-7: a/ instrumental original; b/ intabulation from Kotter MS /[74]

Ex.III-12 McGee ex.7.14 Alexander Agricola 'De tous biens plaine': ex.7.15a A. Agricola "Se je vous eslonge and Paul Hofhaymer "Eine junckfraw zart[75]

Examples 7.14a and b are for three instruments, in contrast to the probably solo instrument of the two keyboard examples. The ornaments here too are smoother than those of the earlier period and are mainly scalar. Ornaments are applied to both superius and bass lines in almost equal quantities but are omitted from the tenor line because of the type of composition, which is a two-part accompaniment of an established melody carried by the tenor. We must be wary of assuming that everything exhibited in these settings would have been extemporized - for

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[74] See Music Examples A. Ch. III-11 McGee ex.7.12 and 7.13.
[75] See Music Examples A. Ch. III-12 McGee ex. 7.14, 7.15a and 7.15b

example the parallel thirds in example 7.14b, bar 4 - although the frequent long, smooth scale passages were probably part of the instrumental style during those decades. …

There appears to be no agreement as to how many parts receive ornaments or to what degree. The imitative compositions are fairly consistent in assigning ornaments more or less equally to all parts, but non-imitative compositions, both all-vocal and vocal with instrumental accompaniment, can be found with ornaments assigned either to the top line or to all parts.

The Sixteenth Century

McGee explains that the 16th century writers tended to catalogue the ornaments and give them names; the *graces* especially were classified with names such as *trillo, tremolo, groppo,* and *groppo battuto*. It seems that all 16th century ornaments are hardly different from those in the preceding two centuries. They could be the embellishments towards or around a single note or a passages of longer duration which connect the notes of the original. The main difference is that the 16th century treatises acknowledge that there are different types of embellishments for a single note and that "the different intervals or note patterns allow for various kinds of inventive *passaggi*."[76]

By about 1580 there seems to have been a change from the more evenly paced ornaments of the earlier years of the century to bursts of ornaments separated by sections with no ornaments at all. In practice they were combined as the needs of the line and the opportunities and skills of the ornamentor allowed. …

For those countries from which we do not have formal instruction manuals we must again turn to examples from the repertory. …

The embellished repertory supports the supposition that at least in instrumental music the practice of ornamentation described in the manuals was pan-European in its basic concept. The difference in style from one country to the other during the late Renaissance was for the most part one of degree and of preference for one type over the other. …

Near the year 1600 changes in the concept of music gained momentum, eventually bringing about the era we call baroque. The style of embellishing the music was also somewhat new, and although the baroque era is beyond the scope of this study, I will consider the broad general differences in the new style as a method of delineating the style of the Renaissance and to show the direction of the performance practices towards the end of the sixteenth century. …

Tables 10 and 11 summarize the changes in both the general practice of ornamentation and the national differences. When coupled with table 1[77] they should serve as a reminder of those details found above and in the repertory.

Conclusion

The evidence that has survived tells us that ornamentation was regularly added in performances of early music. Certain figures peculiar to each century and location were the particular elements of local style, but the basic ideas of graces, passaggi, and cadential figures were common to all. In a modern re-creation of this music performers should be prepared to add some of these according to the proper styles, as discussed above, and to decide how much to add within any particular style. It is not necessary for all embellishments of, say, a sixteenth-century Italian

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[76] For various rules see in the Chapter 5.
[77] See Music Examples A. Ch. III-13 McGee Table 10 and 11

composition to take on the florid extremes found in some of the manuals, nor is it wise for many even to attempt this.

The performers must decide how much they feel capable of adding. The fact that a sixteenth-century virtuoso wished to display his technical prowess does not indicate either that it was considered in good taste or that everyone in his era strove to emulate him; that some performers in the early centuries displayed their technique at the expense of the music is well documented.

What is suggested here is that some ornaments should be added to most early music, and that the quantity and type should be decided according to the evidence of style, the ability of the performer to execute them gracefully, and the effect the ornaments have on the composition. It is up to modern performers to decide for themselves the degree to which they will decorate the music and/or display their technique. The two elements are not incompatible, and each case must be decided on its own.

B. Thomas: on ornamentation in practice[78]

Once again, this [repertory for lute or keyboard] has to be treated very circumspectly if we are to use the material for other instruments. The divisions in these collections often involve a great deal of passing dissonance, which is not in itself a problem in music with a clear chordal structure, but it also involves irrational leaps from one register to another, …

If we were to transfer the moving passage to a melody instrument such as a *cornetto* or recorder, the leaps would sound quite bizarre, but when the whole is played on one or more plucked instruments, the ear smooths out the melodic progressions. Even bowed instruments can get away with a little of this, but not wind instruments. The difference between lutes at one extreme, and wind at the other, can be summed up in the fact that lutes often had their lower courses doubled at the octave. If we imagine a recorder consort, or indeed any wind consort, in which every note below middle C was doubled an octave higher, the differences become clear.

To some extent we have to assume that every instrument had its own idiom: flue instruments may well have been played with a lot of finger vibrato, as they are in traditional music in many parts of the world (eastern Europe, China, Ireland, etc.). It is reasonable to assume, however, that instruments capable of playing both chords and melodies would have had a radically different approach to divisions from those confined to a single line, which would presumably have had essentially the same approach to musical intervals, and a roughly comparable range, as has the human voice.

So singers and players of sustaining instruments have to be very selective in adapting material from lute and keyboard divisions. Perhaps ornate intabulations are more useful as a general guide to the way a decorated piece is shaped and paced, than as a specific model to be actually transferred to another instrument.

3.2.4. Ornamentation rules in detail - See in the 5th Chapter and in the Appendix

3.2.5. Conclusion on ornamentation

Horsley: In view of the great variety of opinions held even by teachers of the art, it is difficult to say to just what degree these diminutions should be applied when they are used. Dr. Alfred Einstein is of the opinion that the teaching manuals show an exaggerated use of them, and this

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[78] *Companion to Medieval & Renaissance Music*, ed .: T. Knighton and D. Fallows, J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd, London 1992.

may well be true. It seems to me that there can be no doubt that cadences were always embellished when ornamentation was used. There really can be no sure rule as to the use of ornamentation, for freedom and variety are two of the main characteristics of 16th-century improvised embellishment. From the many attempts made by theorists to curb their use, it is evident that diminutions were often too freely used by performers.

A properly controlled use of diminutions does give a sense of beauty to a line—not, it is true, a beauty of subjective expression, but an objective sort of beauty produced by the accumulation of florid and ornate melodic movement. …

It is only through the study of these ornamentation manuals that we can become aware of the technical skills possessed by these 16th-century performers, for little of the polyphonic music which comes down to us in written form gives any hint of what the virtuosi of this period were capable of doing.[79]

Last, and perhaps most important, these manuals helped the average musician to develop a composition technique—a skill in making variations upon a given melodic line. For not only did the performer learn the ornaments and apply them by improvisation in performance, but also the less skilled players and singers prepared their parts in advance, writing out the diminutions and cadences and practicing them before trying them in public. Consciously or unconsciously, such a practice, based on varying the ways in which a specific melodic interval can be embellished, leads to an awareness of the elements of which a melodic line is constructed and a technical skill in creating an ornate line from a few simple melodic skips. And any art that develops a sense of musical construction along with a technique for producing that construction cannot but be important in the development of musical style itself.

Thomas:

It is a question of taking them for what they are: manifestations of the avant-garde of their time, a time in which the art of diminution had been taken to such a height that it developed its own special process. If one were to choose a text-book for what we might call High Renaissance improvisation (that is, pre-mannerist), I would suggest Ortiz. His *Tratado de glosas* of 1553 has been rather neglected; it has been largely ignored by players of wind instruments because it has been regarded as viol-player's territory, and string-players have concentrated on the ricercare at the expense of his very useful repertory of decorative figures. This tendency for modern instrumentalists to develop largely without reference to players of other instruments is one of the main obstacles to understanding many aspects of Renaissance music; it was obviously not a characteristic of musical life in the Renaissance, given that Ganassi wrote treatises both for the recorder and the viol, and that Dalla Casa, supposedly a virtuoso *cornetto* player, arranged ten pieces for the *viola bastarda*.

McGee:

Most of the early writers emphasized that each musician must eventually establish an individual style - a point made clear by the vast differences in the examples given in the manuals. For modern musicians, however, there is the added problem of first learning to be stylistically correct in the various eras and countries. A personal style is the last step in the learning process and will appear of its own accord once the many examples from the repertory have been studied to the point where they can be imitated with facility. …

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[79] See also Smith in Chapter 2, pp.31-35.

Many of the writers also furnished a few full examples of their ornaments applied to actual compositions (the source of the last example), and these for the most part tend to be virtuoso displays. The men writing the manuals were known as outstanding *virtuosi* of their day, and we can probably accept their extremely complex and technically demanding ornamentations as the ultimate - a goal for modern early musicians. We must realize that this type of virtuosity was probably rare and that the majority of performers probably performed fewer and less rapid ornaments.

For technically proficient modern musicians who are capable of performing the difficult passages in these treatises, it should be somewhat humbling to remember that the musicians of the time could apparently invent them extemporaneously.[80] …

The only thing that is certain is that not to ornament at all is wrong. To bring early music back to life requires the live and inventive participation of the performer for all repertories. It is unfortunate that for the earliest repertory, where the evidence suggests that the performers were given the most freedom with the written notes, the information about exactly what they did is so lacking in detail.

3.2.6. Ornamentation in Medieval Music[81]

Beside what McGee (in 1988) wrote about ornamentation of medieval music, here are some more recent thoughts and advices:

Ralf Mattes: Ornamentation & Improvisation after 1300[82]

By their very nature, improvisation and ornamentation remove themselves from musicological research that is traditionally based so much on written material, both theoretical and practical. Due to this lack of information, most modern musicians do not incorporate a substantial amount of improvisation or ornamentation into their performances, and the little that can be heard is often based as much on modern performance traditions as on historical sources. …

It has often been claimed that medieval instrumentalists usually improvised the music they played, but a non-written practice is not necessarily an improvised one. Existing descriptions of improvised performance may not be reliable sources of contemporary "everyday" practice because they typically describe musicians of extraordinary skill. Already the earliest surviving sources of organ music show a grade of standardization in notation and manuscript layout that can only be explained by an existing tradition. Therefore, we have to infer the existence of notated instrumental music already in the fourteenth century. …

Certain forms, like the *estampie* or its Italian counterpart, the *istanpitta*, are associated with instrumental dance music even by theorists, and indeed, we do have two manuscripts that contain examples of these types of music (but we should keep in mind that the *estampie* also was a poetical form). …

From modern-day improvised music we can conclude that performers try to remember especially successful manifestations of their improvisations to use them in later performances. Often—

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[80] Here (not in style but in sense) a direct comparison with top jazz musicians, blues and rock musicians, some players of traditional folk instruments and clearly many virtuosos of non-European music is possible.

[81] See also: Timothy T. McGee and his 1998 Oxford monograph *The Sound of Medieval Song: Ornamentation and Vocal Style according to the Treatises*.

[82] From *A Performer's Guide to Medieval Music*, ed. Ross Duffin. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.

especially in the fifteenth century—the difference between improvisation and composition might have been one of the process of creation (at one time versus over a period of time) rather than one of style. Even then, composers tended to revise their works at a later date….

Playing in an ensemble, the improviser of polyphonic music had to ensure that his improvised part did not produce unwanted dissonances with the given tenor (the framework) on which he was improvising. He therefore very likely observed some rules to control the created sonority. …

Ornamentation

It is difficult to separate ornamentation from improvisation, because a substantial part of the instrumentalist's repertoire (as we see it from the surviving sources) was based on the elaboration of given material. However, these two terms should not be confused: while "improvisation" refers to the fundamental process of creating music, "ornamentation" indicates a musical function. Often, excessive ornamentation can be used as a starting point for improvisation, but we also find instrumental music in which the improvised line has no or only a remote resemblance to its vocal model. Our two main sources for fifteenth-century keyboard music, *Codex Faenza* and the *Buxheimer Orgelbuch*, might well serve to illustrate the continuum existing between mere ornamentation of the original setting and free improvisation on a given tenor. …

Simple ornamentation of a given line

One of the earliest sources for instrumental music is the manuscript fragment added to a registry from the Robertsbridge Abbey. Two of the pieces in this manuscript have been identified as arrangements of motets also found in the Paris manuscript of the *Roman de Fauvel*. …

The duplum, the top voice of the composition, is the one with the biggest changes, a fact that we will find confirmed in almost all surviving instrumental arrangements. This short passage demonstrates the basic process of elaboration:[83]

-by breaking down longer note values into smaller ones: mm [measures] 6l, 63 and 67

-by changing the rhythm of notes:18 mm. 62 and 66

-by embellishing shorter notes with trill-like figures: last g' in m. 62

-by embellishing stepwise movement with the anticipation of the next note (this is one of the most idiomatic melodic figures that can be found in many instrumental arrangements). …

Examining the intabulation of *Adesto* we find an astonishingly small number of *melodic* and *rhythmic patterns*, out of which the top voice is "composed." …

The usage of *patterns*, as seen in the previous example, is one way for an improviser to control the melodic and rhythmic material to be used in a piece. These *patterns* reduce the theoretically infinite possible continuations at any point of the improvisation to a more manageable number. It is important to point out that the study of these *formulae* is fundamental to the understanding of a particular style of improvisation. The size of this chapter defeats an extended study of all these different styles, but we will later return to pattern-based improvisation as described in some fifteenth-century sources. …

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[83] See Music Examples A. Ch. III-14 Mattes.

Besides these models of ornamentation we also find some harder to categorize alterations that result in the change of entire melodic phrases. On closer examination we see that these variations occur at or close to cadences. Studying the surviving repertoire we will find that there is a limited number of cadence *patterns* that can be freely exchanged. Many of these cadential patterns are bound to certain melodic phrases in the tenor voice that are changed accordingly.

3.2.7 Improvisation

As pointed out earlier in this chapter, improvisation describes the process used to create a work of music. Having only sparse information on the actual process of composition in medieval music, the art of improvisation seems to be lost forever. Belonging to the field of *musica practica* and—in the case of instrumental music—being used mainly by *menestrels*, the description of improvisation never gained the attention of medieval theorists.

Without this theoretical material, our knowledge of medieval improvisation rests solely on descriptions of the performance of improvisers and the conclusions we can draw from a small number of notated pieces that seem to show reflections of an improvisatory repertoire.[84] …

Polyphonic Improvisation

While in monophonic *improvisation* the main focus seems to lie on melodic development, polyphonic playing introduces the question of simultaneous sounding notes. Looking at the surviving corpus of organ music from the fifteenth century we find a gradual shift from the simple technique of using octaves and fifth (therefore creating nothing but a florid version of the tenor) towards the more refined counterpoint found in contemporary vocal music. Fortunately, we do have pedagogical writings that tell us how a medieval organ player learned and taught this kind of *extemporization*. Paumann's *fundamentum*, surviving in two versions, originates in a tradition of didactic organ treatises that can be found in manuscripts such as Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, ms. Clm 775 or ms. Cgm. 811. These sources show us that medieval music teaching was mostly teaching by example. The student would memorize a great variety of *patterns* that later could be used to elaborate a given tenor. Here, the modern performer has a unique chance to follow his medieval precursor by *studying* and *memorizing* the *patterns* and *models* given in these manuscripts. Many of these *formulae* can be used equally well on instruments other than the organ.

The last instrumental repertory covered in this chapter will be the polyphonic versions of Burgundian *basse danse* that can be found in manuscripts from the end of the fifteenth century. We know that instrumentalist improvised *basse danse* over a pre-existing tenor; some of which can still be found in the few surviving dance manuscripts. Most of the surviving settings of *basse danse* are based on the tenor *La Spagna.* While some of these settings are clearly composed, others might reflect the techniques used by the players of the *alta capella* during their performance. Again, we find *patterns* and *sequences* that regulate the polyphonic structure of the piece and serve as an aid for the musicians to coordinate their improvisations. Many of these *patterns* can be found in the early lute fantasias of Francesco da Milano or Marco d'Aquila, showing us that the instrumental music of the early sixteenth century is well based in the traditions of fifteenth-century instrumentalist improvisations.

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[84] This is certainly true but see latter by Mariani, p.38 and in her book Mariani, Angela: *Improvisation and Inventio in the Performance of Medieval Music.*

Conclusion

Due to the limited extent of this introductory chapter, many aspects of late medieval instrumental improvisation could only be mentioned. Further important points omitted entirely include the rhythmic and melodic language of the complex *istanpitte* in the London manuscript, the fifteenth-century Italian dance repertory, and instrumental preludes for voice. However, I hope that the information provided here will serve as a starting point for the modern performer's own investigation. Improvisation can only be learned by doing, so today's musicians will have to work closely with the little surviving material of the past, *memorizing* it and trying to produce their own versions of a tenor line or a polyphonic chanson (first written, then only *alla mente*), keeping in mind that medieval models might only show a small part of the variety of medieval instrumental music. Finding the balance between personal imagination and given styles must be the goal of any serious performer of this music today.

3.3 Improvisation

Before discussing improvisation in the Renaissance and Early Baroque periods, I would like to continue on improvisation during the Middle Ages, quoting various authors to demonstrate its existence in the medieval religious and secular performances of both vocal and instrumental music.

3.3.1 Mariani: Improvisation in the Medieval Music:

After my Croatian book on improvisation has been already in print I discovered several books and articles dealing with improvisation, rhetoric etc. in the Middle Ages. Beside what I already cited by R. Mattes, the most important[85] is the book by an American musicologist, musician and teacher Angela Mariani.[86] Following the steps of already mentioned late Thomas Binkley and particularly writing of Ana Maria Busse Berger, Mariani deals with process of *inventio*, notation and *memoria*, inventing melody and organum, rhetoric of invention and gives many excellent examples and advices how we can improvise today an *estampie* in the style of the late 13th or early 14th century music.[87]

We still sometimes think of the Middle Ages, which lasted for almost a thousand years, as of "Dark Age", something truly distinct and fundamentally different from the Renaissance. However, the truth is that the Renaissance wouldn't have existed without the Middle Ages, and that a whole range of processes that further developed in the Renaissance began already in the Middle Ages.

This applies to all arts in general, and to literature and music in particular.

There were several small renaissances in the Middle Ages, such as the Carolingian Renaissance (8th and 9th centuries), Ottonian Renaissance (10th century) and the Renaissance of the 12th century.

One of the important factor (much more than in the case of later mensural notation[88]) in both sacred and secular music, was neumatic notation. The connection of poetry with music, the use of memory, and the rules of rhetoric were already present and well developed same as studying of ancient Greek and Roman treatises on rhetoric and memory.

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[85] Also because of it practical value for students or others who would like to learn how to improvise music of this, but also of later periods.
[86] Angela Mariani: *Improvisation and Inventio in the Performance of Medieval Music,* A Practical Approach, Oxford University Press, NY 2017 - available also in Kindle version.
[87] See more detailed on rhetoric and *arte della memoria* in the Chapter 6. and 7.
[88] Which too give only a basis on which the musicians of late 15th, 16th and early 17th centuries would start to add ornaments, passages or improvise upon, see Ortiz etc.

I think we can suppose that many of important elements of renaissance musical performance practice wouldn't be possible if not already practised by medieval (particularly from the later period, *trecento* and early *quattrocento*) church and secular musicians in a to say at the very least rudimentary form: improvised organum, or singing to a book in the church and the ornaments, accompanied song and improvisation (or *inventio* as it is called by Angela Mariani[89], see later), the birth of real instrumental music etc.

3.3.1.1 Mariani: "What's not on the page":

> In short, for modern players and singers, the first step toward performing music that was written in neumes, unmeasured notation, ambiguous early mensural notation, or even fourteenth-century notation involves recognizing and listing the areas in which you, the performer, must make decisions and, in some cases, invent musical content: articulation, gesture, tempo, dynamics, text declamation, accompaniment, instrumentation, perhaps even rhythm. The added material is a product of the performer's <u>invention</u>—just as it was for them. In our case, the added material is also a product of our historical imagination—a fact that immediately creates an unavoidable distinction between ourselves and the medieval performer. This is part of the contradiction that is "performing medieval music," and if we wish to be modern performers playing medieval repertoire, we must learn to navigate comfortably within that liminal space. ….

I shall not go further into this part of the problem because those interested could find Mariani's book in a university library or bought it like me in a paperback or even digital Kindle version.

But I shall quote some more practical advices which will, according to my opinion, help you to understand both the similarities and differences between medieval and renaissance improvisation.

First I want to mention only few words about memory and rhetoric which have been practised and used in medieval as in the later music because we shall deal with that subject latter, in Chapter 6. and 7.

Here are some important practical advices found by Mariani:

> Improvisation and invention are part of the process that is medieval music performance practice, and in order to do that, one must have a <u>storehouse</u> of memorized musical vocabulary, techniques, and repertoire on which to draw. …

> This book will be useful to musicians whose primary teaching and performing activities are both inside and outside the area of medieval music. It is also intended to be useful to advanced students who want to tackle medieval music performance practice but desire guidance when it comes to providing all the musical content that is not on the page but is still necessary in order to create a convincing performance. It provides usable models for performance while offering sufficient historical and theoretical information to enable the reader to understand the models. A certain amount of individual volition and proactive energy is also assumed; in many areas the content of the book points the way down the path but does not hold the hand of the walker. …

> Taking all of that into consideration, it is still important to state that no written pedagogical treatise can take the place of learning by imitating a living model. I would encourage any student who uses this book to do so in conjunction with actual teachers of medieval music. …

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[89] In her extraordinary book *Improvisation and Inventio*.

In medieval texts, the act of *inventio* is most often described using the language of rhetoric. As Mary Carruthers points out in *The Craft of Thought*, "In antiquity and through the Middle Ages, invention or 'creative thinking 'received the most detailed attention in the domain of rhetoric, rather than of psychology or what we would now call the philosophy of mind." *Inventio* was inextricably related to *memoria*, and inventive skill was completely tied to the possession of well-organized reserves of memory from which the speaker (writer, artist, or musician) could draw: …

Memory is most like a library of texts, made accessible and useful through various consciously-applied heuristic schemes." Carruthers also points out that a commonly used metaphor for the "educated memory" was the Latin word *thesaurus*, which translates as "storage room," and that "the image of the memorial storehouse is a rich model of pre-modern mnemonic practice." …

Listening to music has become an almost completely passive process; you do not have to leave your house to hear it, much less take part in its creation or memorize it. This passivity sometimes extends to more general learning processes as well; students often ask why they are asked to memorize facts and find it difficult to understand why they are required to memorize data when the facts can be had from the Internet in seconds. The answer is that a storehouse of memorized content enables us to integrate different aspects of that content. In terms of the medieval "seven liberal arts," memory facilitates integration not just in the practice of the language arts of the trivium but also in the practice of the scientific and musical disciplines of the quadrivium. It is quite difficult to generate critical thought or formulate a hypothesis if you have to google the facts every thirty seconds, and it is difficult to improvise Notre Dame organum if you have not internalized the rules of interval progression and you cannot recall the tenor line. A model will not be effective if the demonstration offered by the model is not held in the memory.

3.3.1.2 Improvisation Versus Composition

In addition to acknowledging that skill at *inventio* requires a good storehouse of memory, we must also explore the distinction between improvisation and composition if we are to try and understand the processes by which various musicians in the Middle Ages performed beyond or outside of notation. That distinction is not always clearly articulated, and improvisation is sometimes thought of as a kind of "sped-up composition,"…

Whereas composition occurs in a series of discontinuous episodes that can span days, weeks, or months in the completion of a work, improvisation occurs in a single, continuous creative episode. Whereas composers usually work alone, improvisation—which can certainly happen in solitude—often occurs collectively. Whereas compositions are created at times and places that are different from when they are presented to audiences, improvisation involves simultaneous creation and performance. ...

3.3.1.3 The Way It Was, And The Way It Is

Because of the nature of the transmission of medieval music, some degree of improvisation, fluid composition, or any other manifestation of *inventio* is necessary to create and deliver a performance, including performances intended to reflect historical practices and processes. …
... Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, in his important book *The Modern Invention of Medieval Music*, declares candidly that most "medieval music" currently being performed is in effect "new music." Whether or not this statement was intended to be provocative, it is welcome, and in a sense, it frees us from the tiresome expectation that we must have a historical justification for

every note and nuance in our performances. In a repertoire with nonprescriptive notation and no living composers, how could our performances not contain "new music"?[90]

3.3.1.4 Living and "Imagined" Models: A New Oral Tradition

Music is passed orally from one person to another through a tripartite process of demonstration, imitation, and critique. The master plays, the student imitates, and the master offers the student constructive critique. Even today, when a musician learns a piece "by ear" from a recording, she is still imitating a model, and in most cases will receive critique through her own ears, from other listeners, or from another musician whose license to critique is based on a more advanced ability to imitate. In most of the world's musical traditions, singers and instrumentalists learn to create music, and in some cases improvise, by acquiring through demonstration and imitation the language of melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic patterns, gestures, and idioms that characterize a particular repertoire and therefore provide tools for invention.

Modern performers of medieval music, however, are in a unique situation because they are attempting to learn a music characterized by a substantial oral element while the line of direct transmission essentially has been broken. ...

3.3.1.5 Notation and Memoria: What's Not on the Page

Every process has a beginning, and when we embark upon a serious study of the performance of medieval music, we usually begin by learning specific pieces. Whether we learn the pieces from transcriptions or from the actual medieval manuscripts themselves, we soon discover that only a limited amount of information about any given medieval piece exists "on the page." If we learn a medieval piece by ear from another musician or from a recording and then look at the written notation, we usually discover that we have learned quite a bit of material that is not written into the original manuscript or transcription: the other musician's phrasing, gesture, rhythmic interpretation, and any number of other unwritten factors. …

We are also at a disadvantage because we cannot possibly hear or experience medieval music as medieval listeners heard and experienced it, whether they were musicians or non-musicians. We cannot "unhear" Josquin, Mozart, Beethoven, Schönberg, or Duke Ellington. …

If musicians born in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries wish to perform medieval music, breathe life into it, and make it our own music, we must begin the process by listening to it and familiarizing ourselves with the repertoire. Learning one *trecento* ballata will not suffice; one has to listen to, read through, and live with <u>dozens</u> of pieces in a particular genre to begin internalizing the sounds in the memory.

See also Mariani on medieval modes in Chapter 2., pp.17-19.

3.3.1.6 Inventing Melody: Old Instruments, New Voices

Iconographic and literary sources from the medieval period abound with evidence of both instrumental performance and collaboration among singers and instrumentalists, …

Despite the existence of such vivid descriptions of the interaction of instruments and voices, we cannot say with any certainty exactly what was being played by the instruments, as written accompaniments either did not survive or did not exist in the first place. Some descriptions say

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[90] See also in Chapter 2, p.6.

that the instruments played "the melody," but not always; others describe preludes, alternations of instruments with voices, or instrumental pieces used as interludes. …

Some questions regarding the use of instruments have even become somewhat contentious, and others are unlikely to be definitively answered. The one exception is the obvious use of instruments for dance music; on that there is universal consensus, since there are many surviving examples of instrumental pieces identified by title with specific dances.

As for the rest, however, there are widely divergent opinions about the use of instruments to play an untexted line in a polyphonic piece; the addition of preludes, interludes, or postludes to medieval pieces, either instrumental or vocal; the instrumental accompaniment of medieval song; the ornamentation of, or improvisation upon, an already-extant melody; or the creation of new instrumental pieces with the style and structure of medieval dances. …

3.3.1.6 (Binkley) "Play What The Instrument Wants To Play"

The ground-breaking medieval music performer and scholar Thomas Binkley
often told his students, "Play what the instrument wants to play." It is most likely the case that instruments were played in a way that was in concord with their natural physical and sonic properties. In other words, in the process of musical invention, medieval players would take advantage of the natural characteristics of their instruments rather than employ extended techniques.

In a 1992 radio interview, Binkley explained that this was true whether you were playing a pre-composed piece or improvising:

> In the case of improvisation, the idea is not to impress with the fluency of one's playing. Rather, the idea is to find a union of melody with instrument: what can this instrument play that it wants to play, with this sort of a melody that really best suits it? …

When beginning one's inventive journey with a medieval instrument, playing something that is idiomatic to the instrument is also simply practical. While internalizing the idiomatic characteristics of a particular musical genre or repertoire is one of the most important requirements of improvisation or fluid composition, that process is complicated in medieval music because of the lack of audible models from the time period itself. …

3.3.1.7 Written Manifestations of Improvisatory Practice[91]

Another source of repertoire-specific information about improvisatory patterns and gestures occurs in written pieces that seem to reflect an improvisatory practice. This phenomenon is encountered frequently in later Renaissance music, but examples in extant medieval music are rarer and generally manifest in the form of ornamented instrumental versions of a pre-existing piece.

Two notable examples are the Robertsbridge Codex (ca. 1360) and the Faenza Codex (ca. 1415). …
The pieces in Faenza are scored in a way that suggests keyboard performance, although the pieces can be realized by two instruments. …

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[91] Same sources have been mentioned under McGee, p.32 and Mattes, p.36

It is highly likely that the pieces in both Robertsbridge and Faenza represent an improvised tradition, and therefore it provides us with a model, as Richard Taruskin eloquently put it, "for historian-sleuths to interpret". …

In the last chapter of her book, Mariani tried to give some final thought:

Before the advent of recording technology, music was truly an impermanent and ephemeral art. It is difficult even to imagine how music was perceived and valued before it could be captured for repeated listening. No performance could ever be saved; after the last note, it was gone faster than a leaf in the wind. Unless you had a young Mozart scribbling down every note of your improvisation, it was gone as soon as you played it. Furthermore, Wolfgang's notes would only be "readable" to the select few who knew how to decipher them, and would only record a small part of the entire event. Even with the now-unimaginable memory capacity of our forebears, it would be impossible to "save to disk" an entire musical performance, complete with every nuance.

Thus, while we can hold in our hands an art object that was created in 500 or gaze at a fresco painted by Giotto, in truth we have no idea what actual sequence of tones or intervals a twelfth-century *vielle* player may have sounded while accompanying a song.

However, if we did not believe that we could to some extent learn to employ in our performances various aspects of the musical language extant at the time of the original poem or musical work, there would be no point in calling our activity "medieval performance practice ." …

So why do we engage with medieval performance practice, not to mention the additional challenge of trying to teach it? I believe that we do so because it speaks to us, because we still find it relevant and powerful, and because engaging with medieval music through an examination of the processes of its transmission and invention transforms how that music is regarded, heard, and understood within the "long memory" of the history of Western music. …

In decades of teaching music history and communicating with classical radio listeners via a syndicated early music program, however, I have found that the notion that Western music somehow evolved directly from "one line of chant melody" to Schönberg, with various mutations along the way, is more prevalent than one might suppose. It is a misunderstanding that is strongly influenced, in my view, by received value judgments based on the presence or absence of functional harmony and the subsequent conscious rejection thereof. It is also a relic of a postcolonial equation of "orality" with the unsophisticated or rudimentary —an equation happily rejected by our contemporary standards, but which nevertheless implicitly and explicitly contributed long ago to the cultural gap between "classical" and vernacular musics that became embedded in Western culture. (For example, we still use terms such as "serious" music or "art" music to imply "not popular or vernacular music," as if popular and vernacular music were not serious and not art.)

It is no surprise, therefore, that it has only been in recent decades that we have come to appreciate that an understanding of the oral, aural, inventive, and improvisatory processes of medieval music leads to a more reasoned assessment of the musical sophistication of our ancient forebears, a better comprehension of their musical and rhetorical values, and a more accurate understanding of the place of medieval music in the continuum—the long memory—of both classical and vernacular Western music practice.

It goes without saying that almost everything said about improvisation in medieval music could be applied to the Renaissance as well, and even to some Early Baroque music, albeit with consideration of substantial stylistic differences.

3.3.2 T. McGee on Improvisation:[92]

Timothy McGee asserts that improvisation played a substantial role in the musical life of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, encompassing both sacred and secular contexts, as well as vocal and instrumental music of those periods. He notes instances where soloists improvised individual parts and highlights situations where all parts in an ensemble piece could be improvised.

> The church organist improvised settings of the chant, complete preludes, intonations, and toccatas, and church choirs were expected to improvise polyphonic settings over a cantus firmus and even to improvise freely an entire polyphonic composition. Wandering minstrels and troubadours improvised the melodic settings of poetry, and it is thought that much of Orfeo's part in Poliziano´s *Feste d´Orfeo* (1480) was performed as an improvised melody to the improvised accompaniment of a *lyra da braccio*.[93] Instrumentalists invented entire dances, new verses to existing dances, preludes, and vocal accompaniments, both solo and in ensemble. The fifteenth-century *basse dance*[94] existed only as a set of long notes which were played by one instrumentalist while one or two others improvised counterpoint around it; and every good instrumentalist was expected to be able to invent a series of variations over one of the standard *ostinato* bass lines.

> Improvised performance was a part of every type of music during the early centuries, and some of the techniques will be discussed here. Instrumental improvisation continued to be popular in all countries throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance and well into the nineteenth century. Vocal improvisation was also popular during the early centuries, but it was less so after the seventeenth, and apparently after the Reformation polyphonic improvisation of sacred vocal music was discouraged in Protestant Germany, although it continued to be practised widely in all other European countries.

> The improvisation of imitative vocal polyphony and instrumental fantasias, ricercares, and so on in the sixteenth century requires an extensive knowledge of counterpoint and is therefore beyond the scope of this study. Discussion here is restricted to monophonic and simple chordal preludes and the addition of one and two parts to an existing melody, forms that do not require such a detailed background on the part of the performer.

For practical advice on ornamentation and improvisation (including improvised *contrapuncto alla mente*) by this author see in his book[95] and by other authors, see in Chapter 4. and 5. of this study.

3.3.3 D. T. Galey on Improvisation: [96]

Speaking about improvisation, **Daniel T. Galey** says that

> "Performers, just like composers, often worked "side by side" on [the same] compositions, and it was often "unnecessary and unworthy to specify how and what to play or sing."

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[92] T.J.McGee: *Medieval and Renaissance Music*, …
[93] See more about that in Chapter 6. and 7.
[94] See latter by K. Polk, p.52.
[95] Ibid. McGee.
[96] Daniel T. Galey: Improvisation: The History of Unplanned Notes in Structured Music, *The Research and Scholarship Symposium*. 25 (2016), Cedarville University, Ohio.

Concerning instrumentalists, by 1475, they "incorporated three basic approaches in their performances: they would play a piece as written, they could add embellishments, or they could improvise." Embellishments were simply a less elaborated form of improvisation. These changes resulted because of the increase in music notation. Adding embellishments was a necessity for all performers and involved adding "decorations to simple melodic outlines." One area where both vocalists and instrumentalists could improvise by adding embellishments was around cadences.

In addition to embellishments, there were several other ways in which musicians could improvise. One way for musicians to create variety in a piece was "to base an improvisatory scheme upon repetitions of a bass pattern." For example, in Susato's piece *Passe e medio*, performers playing the upper parts would take turns improvising over a repeating bass pattern.[97]

The bass pattern in this example was "intended to be repeated, undoubtedly many times, for dancing." Since such repeated patterns eventually turned into a harmonic structure, musicians could use this framework as "foundations for improvisatory performances." These are just a few ways in which improvisation, whether with the voice or with instruments, manifested itself within various structures in the Renaissance.

3.3.4 Ph. Canguilhem: Improvisation as concept etc.

In his article "Improvisation as concept and musical practice in the fifteenth century", french musicologist and musician, **Philippe Canguilhem:[98]**

Thus during the fifteenth century we find the emergence of the notion that music, because of the fixed nature of its written form, could strive for the status associated with a literary work such as a poem. Not only can works be reproduced at will by different musicians for different audiences, but they also become comparable with other, similar works, and can serve as models for other composers.

Numerous written accounts, however, testify to a fifteenth-century fascination with spontaneous creation and improvised performance, be it musical (vocal and/or instrumental), poetic (in Latin or in the vernacular), or a combination of the two. Exploring this essential aspect of Renaissance musical practice is a difficult endeavour that demands much flexibility in its historical interpretation.

In his very interesting article Canguilhem deals with both Ficino and Poliziano and mentions the spontaneous improvisation of Aurelio Brandolini, one of the best improvisors on the *lyra* of the late 15th century in Italy. For the author there is a little doubt that *lyra* in latin (or *lira* in Italian) at this period could mean anything but the bowed lira da braccio. See about this and the terminology problems, later, in the 6th and 7th Chapter of this study.

Canguilhem stresses very important modern misconception of association of improvisation with an absence of planning. During this period improvisation should be understood only through the *extemporaneitas*, the act of creating in a given moment which is only possible, after a period of long and patient preparation - by Quintilian, *consuetudo* and *exercitas* or habit and exercise.

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[97] See in Keith Polk: Instrumentalists and Performance Practice in Dance Music, c.1500, in McGee, *Improvisation in the Arts,* p.52.

[98] Philippe Canguilhem: Improvisation as concept and musical practice in the fifteenth century, *The Cambridge History of Fifteenth-Century Music*, Cambridge University Press, 2015.

We shall speak more in detail about *arte della memoria* later in this compendium.[99]

As we have already seen by Mariani (p.40) improvisation is not at odds with writing; on the contrary, it depends deeply on it. As a very interesting (written) source which document the connection between writing and improvisation, Canguilhem mentions the work *Fundamentum organisandi,* written in 1452 by the blind German organist and lutenist Conrad Paumann. It contains a whole series of systematic formulas, arranged into[100]:

> cadences (*clausulae*), progressions with ascending or descending intervals while the tenor is played by the left hand (*ascensus et descensus*), ornamentations on a single repeated note in the tenor (*pausae or redeuntes*), and sequences of homophonic consonances (*concordantiae*).

> Learning and memorizing these formulas allowed instrumentalists to spontaneously produce a right-hand part above a sacred or secular tenor. Once these formulas were memorized, musicians "were able, to use them in unwritten performances as well as in written-out compositions."[101]

Canguilhem writes too about the practice of *Cantare super librum* but we shall leave that for the next, 4th Chapter. He mentions also the *basse danse* repertory, similar with the plainchant (cantus firmus) repertory.

3.3.5 Ph. Canguilhem: Polyphonic Improvisation in the Renaissance

In another place[102] Canguilhem writes about improvisation on instruments mentioning among others Diego Ortiz (*mestro di cappella* of the Viceroy Chapel in Naples) who states that *fantasia* cannot be taught, because every good instrumentalist plays it in his own way. Canguilhem says too that:

> In Italy, several other musicians had developed comparable talents and were sought after for both their viola playing and their compositional skills. In 1553, Alfonso della Viola - aptly named - was praised by the Neapolitan musician Luigi Dentice as "no less miraculous in counterpoint and composition than in viola playing in concert."[103] Dentice's distinction between counterpoint and composition undoubtedly refers to the specific improvisational talents of the master of the chapel of the Duke of Ferrara, alongside his skills as a composer. A few decades later, Claudio Monteverdi, an accomplished violist, was sought after at the court of Mantua for his ability to play "*alla bastarda*," a type of exercise derived from Ortiz's third manner of playing called "*quinta boz.*" - or *quinta pars*.[104]

> "The most eloquent testimony of improvisational skill on the viola by an Italian composer comes from the Ferrarese philosopher Francesco Patrizi.[105] In a manuscript treatise written in 1577[106], Patrizi describes with astonishment and admiration the abilities of Alfonso Ferrabosco in this regard. Ferrabosco astounds listeners by being able to sing one part while playing the other on

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[99] Capter 6., p.9 etc.
[100] Canguilhem, ibid.
[101] Berger, Anna Maria Busse, *Medieval Music and the Art of Memory*, Berkeley, 2005 128
[102] In his book, Philippe Canguilhem: *L ìmprovisation polyphonique à la Renaissance*, Classiques Garnier, Pariz, 2015.
[103] Canguelhem, footnote: Dentice 1553, p.33: „*il quale non è men miracoloso nel contrapunto et nel comporre, che nel sonare la Viola d'arco in conserto*". The first edition of the treatise of Dentice appeared in Naples in 1552.
[104] P.C .: Among other vocal composers whose viola playing was well known, we must mention Alessandro Striggio. Jacques Arcadelt also seems to have been a violist: he worked on the estates of the King of France as a chamber gambist from 1546 to 1574. See Handy 2008, p. 107.
[105] IP: He is in fact "our" Franjo Patricij-Patricio, a philosopher who was born on Cres in 1529 and died in Rome in 1597. Among other things, he taught at the University of Ferrara.
[106] Entitled *L ّamorosa filosofia*.

the viola.[107] The use of counterpoint in such an exercise is employed as a strategy to substitute for the written parts, which are difficult to decipher in real time, with invented parts: "in difficult passages, he frees himself from strict adherence to the written parts and demonstrates his contrapuntal talents." Indeed, the difficulty lies in the inability to "simultaneously look at the musical notes in two different books, and the words of one of them, and his fingers on the keys: a task so difficult that it seems almost impossible." That is why Ferrabosco, "in difficult and close passages, where the eye cannot satisfy the necessity of seeing all the notes one by one, uses counterpoint and fills in the gaps that the eye would be forced to leave."

At the end of this paragraph, I want to mention what Canguilhem wrote about the work of the Renaissance organist or everyday improvisation[108]

> More than any other, the profession of organist indeed required a constant ability to adapt, not only to the various plainchant melodies that needed to be accompanied, but also to the changing tone of the choir with which one had to play alternately. The organist could not play a pre-composed repertoire, which would have prevented, for example, the ability to vary the length of instrumental interludes according to the circumstances of the worship. 'Playing' the organ in church thus consists of constant improvisation, which implies, according to the opinion of Adriano Banchieri at the beginning of the 17th century, 'knowledge of modes and their endings, of counterpoint, of the manner of fuguing in fifths and fourths, and requires the study of numerous compositions to derive useful lessons from them.

> A good way to gauge these skills and how they were to be put into practice is to examine the recruitment competition tests for organists that have come down to us. In some cases, particularly in Italy, we know what was required of the candidates, as in Treviso in 1531, when they had to play polyphonically on plainchant ("*rispondere al choro*" or "*al canto firmo*") and improvise ricercars. Half a century later, in 1579, the competition at the Basilica of the Santo in Padua included four tests: playing briefly "*di fantasia*"; responding to different Kyries; responding to the Magnificat in different tones; and accompanying a given plainchant improvised by one of the jury members. In Spain, the exercises requested were similar, such as those that candidates had to perform at the Malaga competition in 1552. On the first day, the organists had to play vespers, i.e., accompany a child singing the psalmody recitation of the psalms and the Magnificat, as well as the hymn. The next day, they had to play during the Mass and decipher vocal polyphony from a choirbook.

> These tests allowed to verify the competence of the candidates in three different areas, which correspond perfectly to the three categories of organists identified by Biagio Rossetti, himself the organist of the cathedral of Verona and author of a music treatise published in 1529. According to him, some organists are capable of "playing in counterpoint on melodies of plainchant such as proses, hymns, antiphons, sequences, and others." A second category of musicians is formed by those who are able, "thanks to their imagination, to invent harmonious preambles, which they elegantly improvise during parts of the Mass, while still maintaining a solid musical structure." Finally, there are those who "put all their efforts into playing polyphonic chants on their instrument in figured music, conforming to the choir singing in plainchant, without ever deviating from the polyphonic texture, so that each voice of the polyphony can be heard."

> The ideal organist, documents from Italian and Spanish competitions tell us, was one who could master all three techniques at the same time, as they were part of their daily lives. The most famous document that has come down to us about these organ competitions comes from the

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[107] IP: Da gamba or maybe lirone? After all in his last will, beside other instruments is mentioned one *lira*. See also footnote 7 in this chapter.
[108] Compare with what D. Bailey writes about the organists work of our time in Chapter 1 of this study, p. 35 et seq.

Church of St. Mark in Venice. Undated, it was written in the second half of the 16th century and is no different from the exams required in Padua and many other Italian and probably European churches. The characteristic of the document is the precision of the provided details, because among other things, it will not be surprising when it is learned that the candidates were heard in three different tests. First, on the original theme of the polyphonic Mass of Kyrie or on the motet, they were asked to "improvise according to the rules, not mixing the sections, as if four singers were singing." They were then asked to play a melody taken from a choral book, "from which a counterpoint should be invented, placing the choral first in the bass section, then the tenor, alto and finally the soprano, inventing fugue movements according to rules, not just as in the case of simple accompaniment." Finally, the organists had to respond alternately with the choir by imitating the sung verse, in and out of the tone.

To understand how the music improvised by organists during the Renaissance might have sounded, we have preserved written repertoire. This repertoire reveals a close collaboration between organists and singers during the church service, which sometimes extended beyond the alternation of verses to a shared performance where improvisation played a central role.

3.4.0. Renaissance improvisation in other arts; dance, theater and painting[109]

In 1999, a symposium was held at the University of Toronto, organized by T. McGee and Domenico Pietropaolo, which focused on improvisation across various artistic disciplines including music, dance, theatre, and painting. This symposium led to the publication of a book in 2003 containing essays that explore improvisation in different contexts, including the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Particularly interesting is T. McGee's essay "*Cantare all'improvviso*," which I shall discuss in Chapters 6 and 7. These excerpts from the book provide insights into the phenomenon of improvisation during this historical period.

3.4.1. Domenico Pietropaolo: Improvisation in the Arts[110]

In the disciplines that study the verbal arts, for which the very idea of "oral literature" is, strictly speaking, a contradiction in terms, the practice of improvisation continued to be regarded for a long time as a form of artistic crudeness and therefore on the fringes of literary history. In contrast, the analogous practice in Western music, which mostly concerns the singing of discant, the ornamentation of melody, and thoroughbass accompaniment, was for many centuries central to the art, which at times it entirely dominated.

The history of improvisation has not yet been written,[111] but the ambitious scholar who is attracted by the prospect would do well to reflect on the usefulness of writing it regressively, starting with the present and proceeding rearward to the earliest instances of the phenomenon that are within his reach, always arguing from the effect to the cause rather than the other way round.

When we move backwards from the present to the late eighteenth century, and from that time to the early Renaissance, we find our purview becoming, very rapidly, more densely populated with distinguished improvisers, and we discover that our concept of improvisation becomes progressively more inclusive and that its parts become more closely integrated.

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[109] T. J. McGee, ed .: *Improvisation in the Arts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Kalamazoo, Mich .: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2003.
[110] Domenico Pietropaolo: Improvisation in the Arts; article in: *Improvisation in the Arts*, …
[111] IP: Except for the one on Improvisation in Music by E. Ferand from 1938….

Pietropaolo mentions the famous *improvvisatori* (singing to their own accompaniment *ad lyram* i.e. *lira da braccio*) as Leonardo da Vinci and Baccio Ugolini did[112]

These examples lead us to consider that improvisation may be understood in at least two senses. In the first sense it refers to the creation of a complete and previously unscripted performance text, using only the vocabulary of the repertoire and the logic of the genre, while in the second sense it refers to the addition of supplementary material to a scripted but incomplete text, using again the vocabulary and logic of the genre but adhering throughout to the structure of the work given.

The textuality of performance can be conceived as if written on three separate lines.

On the first line, we find the dance steps in sequence, the musical melody, and the dramatic plot, all specific versions of the artistic action in the Aristotelian sense of the word and perceivable as a structured unit with beginning, middle, and end: this establishes the matter of the dance, the music, and the play.

On the second line, we find the accidental dance steps and variations, the musical ornamentation (if not a *discant*[113] or thoroughbass), and the verbal substance of a play: this is the dimension of the action that would be found in the articulation of the text using the specific medium of the art in question, if the text had been fully written as a choreography, a complete score, or a dramatic script.

On the third line we may imagine the physical and vocal gestures involved in the delivery of all three arts: this is the gestural dimension of the action that would be contained in the stage directions, if every segment of the performance text had a detailed stage direction to prescribe it.

In *commedia dell'arte*, the material on the first line is called the scenario, and it is given in its entirety by an author to the company prior to production, whereas the materials for the second line, which includes the dialogue and speeches, and for the third line, which includes the physical articulation of speech and action, are improvised by the performers acting within the constraints imposed by the scenario on the first line. In playwright-dominated traditions, the material on the first and second lines is normally given in its entirety by the author to the company, but the substance of the third line is left largely to the performers, who must produce it in their physical interpretation of the material on the other two lines.

In early vocal music, the composer provides in the score only the material in the first line, the essential melodic structure, whereas the notes for the second line, including discant and ornamentation by diminutions and passagework, and the material for the third, including the gestural expression of emotion and spiritual disposition as well as of the uniqueness of the performance experience, are left for the singer to contribute in his interpretation of the music

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[112] See more about *cantori ad lyram* in the Chapter 6.

[113] This term changes its meaning over the centuries. Discant, (descant), (Latin: discantus, meaning "separate singing") originated as a style of liturgical composition in the Middle Ages, associated with the development of the polyphonic school of Notre Dame.

In origin, it is a style of organum that either includes a plainchant tenor part (usually on a melisma in the chant) or is used without a plainchant basis in conductus, in either case with a "note against note" upper voice, moving in contrary motion. It is not a musical form, but rather a technique. The term continued to be used down to modern times with changing senses, at first for polyphony in general, then to differentiate a subcategory of polyphony (either in contrast to organum, or for improvised as distinct from written polyphony). By extension it became the name of a part that is added above the tenor, and later as the name of the highest part in a polyphonic setting (the equivalent of "cantus", "superius", and "soprano"). Finally, it was adopted as the name of the highest register of instruments such as recorders, cornets, viols, and organ stops.

given on the first line. In early baroque music, the thoroughbass is improvised on the second line, whereas the singer's coloratura in virtuosic aria repetitions would be found on both the second and third lines of performance textuality. Similarly in dance, the choreography does not extend beyond the first line, and there it is at times no more than a list of step sequences, transition markers, and starting positions, whereas the ornamentation and the expected pattern and rhythm modifications—which at once embellish the choreographed movements and turn them into specific signifying structures—and the gestural articulation that accompanies the total flow of the body in motion are improvised respectively on the second and third lines.

In producing the material for the second line, the performer was expected to be both faithful to what he had received and creative in his own contribution. …

Now in the mind the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance distinguished the operation of two kinds of imagination: a reproductive imagination, by which previously memorized materials are retrieved to presence, and a productive imagination by which new ones, distinct from those already given, are brought to consciousness. The reproductive imagination is a near synonym of memory, but it is active rather than passive and includes a sense of purposeful agency which memory does not.

Performance by means of improvisation involves both forms of imagination in a ratio that varies continuously along the temporal axis of the text. In the medieval <u>rhetorical</u> tradition the special distinction of an improviser is his "readiness to draw upon a store,"[114] where the readiness may be interpreted as his productive imagination, which knows what new objects, beyond those already given in the text, must be brought materially into textual existence, and the act of retrieval as his reproductive faculty, which provides him with a choice of objects from the repository deep in his memory. For this reason instructional programs in all the performing arts emphasize the conscious retention and accumulation of minimal segments of text for later use in appropriate performance contexts.

An impromptu performer "acts more from imagination than from memory"—or, in the terminology that we have already introduced, more from the productive than from the reproductive imagination-—because he memorizes the story outline and the configuration of the scenes, but he composes the actual text during the performance itself by tapping into his own creative power.

But though he makes up the material being of the text on stage by drawing it out at an amazing speed from some mysterious place in his imagination just as it begins to take shape in it, he is not exclusively an improviser since he must adhere very closely to the guidelines of the scenario in order to avoid chaos.

All performances involve the productive and the reproductive imagination as combined sources, but what distinguishes the extempore acting of *commedia dell' arte* players is that the ratio by which the two faculties are united is by far in favour of the productive imagination, whereas in script-based acting the weight is on the side of the reproductive faculty. The logic of impromptu acting is grounded in the reproductive imagination insofar as the narrative structure of the performance and the actor's repertory of phrases and gestures are concerned, but it is grounded only in the productive imagination in what pertains to the textuality needed to sustain that structure.

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[114] More about that see in the Chapter 6. And 7.

One cannot be a successful impromptu performer without a fertile imagination, for one must be alert to all subtle turns of the action and be quick in bringing forth the most appropriate text for the situation.

Like all other skills, impromptu performance requires years of training, the right disposition by itself being (as a mathematician would say) a necessary but not a sufficient condition. It has always been assumed, and the assumption is entirely reasonable, that, as far as drama is concerned, the training took place within the troupes themselves, where children learned the art of improvising from older members of the company. …

It follows from these considerations that the conception of improvisation that obtained in early modem Europe is quite removed from the various techniques that the term designates in our times. The chief differences can be usefully summarized by negative determination—that is, by indicating what Early Modern improvisation was not. It is clear that dramatic improvisation was not then a rehearsal exercise in character discovery, which is what the term principally designates for much twentieth-century theatre practice. Nor was it a compositional exercise aimed at the full development of a script through an impromptu exploration of a given situation or theme, which is what the term represents for many script-development programs in our times. Equally clear is that, in this early period of its history, stage improvisation was never a spontaneous form of creation *ex nihilo*, mysteriously progressing towards aesthetic fullness without the aid of predetermined constraints, as has been occasionally fantasized on the basis of various pseudo romantic notions of primitive creativity. On the contrary, improvisation in this period would be inconceivable without rigid constraints.

In the oral composition of lyric poetry, for example, control over the material to be expressed extempore is ensured by the semantic field of the theme selected, which represents for the impromptu poet the limits of his available vocabulary, while control over the aesthetic shape of the product is exercised by means of the metrical patterns and rhyme schemes to which the improviser consents to adhere before he begins his performance. …

Musical improvisation is likewise conditioned by structural conventions which were at times codified into very precise rules. …

Similarly in the theory of dance, performance can be regarded as a combination of steps memorized from a choreographer's plan and steps dictated to the dancer solely by his productive imagination, working in unison with his reproductive faculty and interwoven by him in extempore fashion with the steps in the choreography. As in drama and poetry, improvised dance steps had to occur within a precise framework of rules. …

In drama, this range becomes even more restricted in the performance of plays which are partly scripted and partly left for the performers to improvise on stage, and becomes relatively narrow in the case of plays for which the script exists in full. That improvisation is necessary in the first of these cases is obvious and requires no further comment—the scenes to be improvised in dialogical form are sustained by the same model of binary combinations into elementary segments of text. ...

In all these acts of improvisation, the performer's awareness of the structural parameters in which he must contain himself must be coupled with an equally clear awareness of the degree to which the audience is familiar with the verbal, visual, and musical vocabulary with which he is about to fashion his product—that is, pushing his art somewhat beyond the limits expected by the audience and yet remaining sufficiently within them to preclude any sense of obscurity. When this is done with the required skill, the final product observed by the audience is seamless and

totally free of signs that may indicate uncertainty of development. In fact, the audience should not be able to distinguish an improvised performance from one based on a fully scripted score, choreography, or play text. What, then, is the difference between an improvised and a non-improvised performance? From the perspective of the phenomenology of perception, the only answer possible is that there is no difference at all: the performers enable the audience to experience their living art in exactly the same manner as they would experience a performance based on a previously scripted work. From the perspective of the performers 'perception of themselves in action, the answer is that in improvisation they have authorial status, whereas in non-improvised performances they are instruments of another person's artistic intent and must bend their creativity in order to serve a predetermined artistic vision. Insofar as the performers are the authors of the performance, the show is linked to them in an essential way, and they cannot be replaced without prejudice to the performance text.

The problem, however, is that in addition to performers and audiences there are frequently also readers in the picture, and readers are not concerned with the perception of a living art form but with the written documents that describe in detail the intended performance, generally viewed by them as a more or less successful realization of the author's intention. Readers, in other words, are primarily interested in scores, details of choreography, and complete scripts and only secondarily in performances. For readers, a play text is the fixed artistic matrix that can engender many performances. …

In the staging of scripted plays, the conventional hierarchy of creative forces puts the author invariably above the performers on the principle that the unperformed text has chronological, logical, and aesthetic priority over its performance. But this principle of subordination also has serious economic implications especially in the Renaissance, the period in which performers first achieved professional status and incorporated themselves into a guild or *arte*, which is what the term alludes to in the expression *commedia dell' arte* …

While functioning as a source of performance textuality, the imagination enabled skilled performers to vindicate their ideological, economic, and artistic autonomy in a world otherwise intent on keeping them anchored to a role of subservient dependence. The discovery that the power to improvise was a commercial commodity as well as an artistic faculty emboldened them with visions of cultural and social dignity previously unavailable to them. By cultivating their skills methodically and by marketing them shrewdly, they embarked on a journey that would soon transform them from the instruments of the art of others into the great virtuosos of their own.[115]

3.4.2 Keith Polk: Instrumentalists and Performing Practices in Dance Music, circa 1500[116]:

Even if the main scope of this study-compendium is to analyse the possibilities that "lost, forgotten etc..." art of Italian improvisers could be reconstructed to certain extent, here (as well as in the Chapter 6.) I quote also the authors which wrote about Renaissance improvisation in general and in the ensemble music in particular. Here is what about this phenomenon in the area of dance music wrote Keith Polk:

Instrumental musicians in the courts and cities of Europe around 1500 faced a dynamic, rapidly changing professional scene. Performance practices had hardly been static for several decades, but their development through the fifteenth century had been reasonably smooth. With the

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[115] See, for instance later by Aurelio and Rafaelle Brandolini and others, in the Chapter 6.
[116] Keith Polk: Instrumentalists and Performance Practices in Dance Music, p.1500; in: T. J. McGee, ed . *Improvisation in the Arts ...*

beginning of the sixteenth century, though, instrumentalists faced what amounted to a crisis with particular impact on two of the areas of concern here: improvisation and music for dancing. It will be my purpose in this article to consider the set of conditions that arrived with the new century and to explore how performers responded to the challenges these conditions posed.

A detailed survey of the background of fifteenth-century developments would not be appropriate here, but it should be understood that by about 1475 a quite sophisticated set of musical practices in instrumental music was in place. By then professional instrumentalists incorporated three basic approaches in their performances: they would play a piece as written, they could add embellishments, or they could improvise. …

All performers in the late fifteenth century were trained in the second area, which involved ability to add decorations to simple melodic outlines. The third category, improvisation, formed a central element in contemporary instrumental performances, particularly those in providing music for dancing. In improvisation, especially involving three or more parts, some prior understandings had to have been in operation. One standard approach of the time was to take a pre-existent tune into one part (usually the tenor) and weave one or two counterpoints around this borrowed tune. In short, by the last decades of the fifteenth century instrumentalists had command of mature and reasonably stable practices, with underpinnings which were widely understood …

With the early sixteenth century came a preference for a different kind of dance. Repetitions became more explicit, and phrases were often arranged symmetrically (often in pairs, and often, in modem terms, in four measure units). Moreover, choreographies became more standardized so that one set of steps could be applied regardless of which tune was chosen. This was a vastly less involved repertory and was much easier for the dancers to leam. The symmetries and the repetitions, of course, also made the repertory easier for the musicians to grasp as well.

Another adjustment, with direct effect on dance musicians, was to favour a different set of sonorities and vertical relationships. Rather than either the older structure based on a tune in the tenor or even the newer textures based on imitation, for dancing the favoured texture became one in which the top voice predominated. This changed stature of the soprano is reflected in the way in which borrowed material was incorporated. Much of the dance repertory in the early sixteenth century was created by adapting vocal pieces, as had been the case in the fifteenth century. What was borrowed earlier, however, was usually a tenor part, which was placed in the tenor in the dance version. With the sixteenth century, it was usually the soprano that was borrowed. The preference for soprano-dominated texture was not, of course, limited to the dance. The emerging Parisian chanson as well as the Italian *frottola* were two vocal genres which had, like the dance, a very wide popular appeal in the early sixteenth century. For a dance version of this texture, the well-known *Ronde VI* (example no. 1)[117] from Susato's *Derde musyck boexken* (Third Music Book) of 1551 may serve as an illustration. In addition to the clearly prominent melody in the soprano, note also the regularity of the four-measure phrases.

By about 1530 this texture was deeply rooted and was accepted as the prevailing one for all manner of dances. Most such pieces were evidently short and included two or more repeated sections. This kind of structure was in striking contrast to that of the Burgundian dances of a generation earlier and called for a different balance of performance techniques. In pieces like the *Ronde*, for example, with the repetitions the musicians would be expected to demonstrate their mastery of the art of embellishment. Compensation for relatively less emphasis on improvisation was provided by relatively more on decoration. Underscoring this change, which dates from the

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[117] From Susato 's edition of dances, *Derde musyck boexken* (Third Music Book) from 1551.

early sixteenth century, musicians such as Silvestro Ganassi of Venice produced treatises on how one might ornament a line artistically.

To describe the new texture in terms of the top part is incomplete, of course, for in fact now the emphasis was on both of the outer parts. Clearly the bass was also thrown into particular prominence in the texture. As this happened players evidently quickly took advantage of yet another new approach which was to base an improvisatory scheme upon repetitions of a bass pattern.

Example III-15 Polk, ex.1 - Ronde VI, from T. Susato, Danserye (Het derde musyck boexken, 1551)[118]

The earliest such patterns of which we know seem to be Italian, especially those associated with the *passamezzo*. Again Susato's *Derde musyck boexken* provides an example with a *Passe de medio* which is based on a pattern (in Example 2 in the bass: D-C-D-A//D-C-D-A-D) similar to the *passamezzo antico*.

Example III-16 Polk, ex.2 Passe de medio, from Tielman Susato, Danserye, ed. Thomas./[119]

The piece (given complete in Example 2) is quite short and is intended to be repeated, undoubtedly many times, for dancing. The structure is again based on repetitive four-measure phrases, and it is with the repetitions that the bass pattern becomes especially clear. The repeats would have been enlivened by a variety of decorative techniques in the upper parts with the responsibilities for embellishment likely being passed from performer to performer. As the musicians did this they could also create a variety of textural contrasts. In a four-part fabric, for example, the player of the tenor might take over in rapid motion while the soprano and alto could drop out (which could result not only in a welcome change in timbre, but an opportunity of the players to rest). Susato published the *Passe e medio* in 1551, but he was probably familiar with the use of bass patterns during his career as an instrumentalist in the civic ensemble of Antwerp in the 1530s and 1540s. In fact, at least one ensemble version using a similar pattern is found in a set of dance pieces in the *Augsburg Liederbuch*, which has been dated c.1513 and which would indicate that such patterns were being put to use by the turn of the century.

Ultimately this new emphasis on soprano and bass led to a kind of polarity between these two outside voices. That is, eventually musicians heard the outside voices as by far the most important with the inside voices as providing a kind of filler. Very soon with this texture what musicians would have heard would be a series of vertical sonorities—that is, a series of chord "progressions."[120] With this development would have come, one assumes, an increasing awareness of the harmonic framework. And in turn one might further assume that players would have been quick to seize the advantage of such frameworks and incorporate them as flexible foundations for improvisatory performances. This would have been true especially for dance musicians, for we must keep in mind that these players were involved in providing music for dancing which was often noted as lasting through an entire night. Such long sessions were not only exacting in terms of physical stamina since the demand for musical raw material must indeed have been pressing.

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[118] See Music Examples A. Ch. III-15 Polk, ex.1.
[119] See Music Examples A. Ch. III-16 Polk, ex.2.
[120] This can be compared to a similar development by (at least printed) frottolas; the outer voices of the cantus and bassus gain importance, while the inner voices lose it. Considering the tonal and rarely modal structure of this musical-poetic form, the chord progression becomes significant. From my own experience: singing the superius you perform the accompaniment on the lira da braccio (or lute) in chords based on "frame" of highest and lowest part, filling the middle from the two inner parts.

Despite such motivation, however, the musical evidence would suggest that musicians in the first decades of the sixteenth century did not avail themselves of the potential of repetitions of harmonic frames with any consistency. To the ear trained in the conventions of tonal harmony (that is, the practices governing harmony from Johann Sebastian Bach onward), once a melody with its chordal support is heard, we tend to hear the two (melody plus chords) as an entity. In jazz improvisation, for example, musicians refer to knowing the "changes" that go with a particular melody. But this consistent identification of a particular set of chords to go with a melody had not yet developed in the early sixteenth century. In two versions of *Mille ducas* (again provided by Susato), for example, no strong resemblance of harmonic structure seems to be shared between the two (Examples 3-4).[121]

Some outlines of the top part are common to both settings, but even this voice is treated with considerable freedom (it is at least close enough at the beginning to establish a relationship between the two versions). The bass part, however, seems only vaguely related, and the harmonic structures are hardly linked at all. In short, in these pieces—and in some others of the earlier sixteenth century discussed by Daniel Heartz—the soprano/bass complex did not appear to generate a framework of chords which would have provided the basis for further improvisation. Of course the soprano/bass texture ultimately did lead to greater harmonic awareness. Indeed, early on a number of pieces do share a harmonic framework between different versions. Susato, for example, based a *Salterelle* on *Ronde VI* in which both the outline of the melody and the harmonic frame are quite audibly related. Still, as a standard device this seems to have been a development that gathered its momentum after the mid-sixteenth century.

3.4.3 Leslie Korrick: Improvisation in the Visual Arts, a 16th-century view from Italy[122]

When we think about improvisation beside music what comes to our minds first are theatre and dance but probably rarely the so called visual (Beaux-) Arts. Because of that I thought including here some important quotations from the article by prof. Leslie Korrick would be useful:

In the visual arts, the concept of improvisation is primarily associated with twentieth-century Modernist production. For many, the word itself immediately calls to mind the early experiments toward non-representational painting of Wassily Kandinsky, who used it to title images representing what he called in 1911 a "*hauptsächlich unbewußte, größtenteils plötzlich entstandene Ausdrücke der Vorgänge inneren Charakters*" ("largely unconscious, spontaneous expression of inner character"). As a working method, improvisation was adopted and subsequently exploited by Surrealist imagemakers whose *"[a]utomatisme psychique*" ("psychic automatism") of the later 1920s and 1930s was both inspired and justified by Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic research at the turn of the century.

Improvisatory activity has also informed Modernist performance art, from the stage events of 1916 at the Dada *Cabaret Voltaire* in Zurich to the Neo-Dada intermedia presentations of Fluxus which began in 1962 chiefly inspired by the chance operations of John Cage. On the basis of these and other projects, Modernist definitions of improvisation are typically characterized by a belief in the simultaneous conception and manifestation of a given work, which is rendered quickly, impulsively, and with a concomitant freedom of expression. In addition, they tend to link improvisation to novel working methods and forms which challenge traditional conventions of making, viewing, and evaluation.

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[121] See Music Examples A. Ch. III-17 Polk, ex.3, III-18 Polk, ex.4 and III-19 Polk, ex.5-1 and ex.5-2.
[122] Leslie Korrick: Improvisation in the Visual Arts: The View from Sixteenth-Century Italy, in: T. J. McGee, ed . *Improvisation in the Arts …*

Because so many of the positions on art and artistic identity allied with Modernism find their origins in the Renaissance—and, particularly, in sixteenth-century Italy—we might expect to find evidence of a vibrant tradition of artistic improvisation, and even a parallel definition, in the images and texts of the *Cinquecento*. …

In his biography of Leonardo da Vinci, for example, Vasari twice relates that this artist was experienced and successful in improvisation. In the first instance, Leonardo's ability to perform extemporaneously is featured with respect to his musical ability and especially his playing of the *lira da braccio* (*lyre*), an instrument intimately connected to the practice of improvisation during the Renaissance. … Vasari tells his reader: "He gave some little attention to music, and quickly resolved to learn to play the lyre (*la lira*), as one who had by nature a spirit most lofty and full of refinement: wherefore he sang divinely to that instrument, improvising upon it". Subsequently, he recounts with even greater enthusiasm that when it came to the recitation of *rime* (rhymes), Leonardo was "the best improvisor . . . of his day". But Vasari never takes up the theme of improvisation in discussions of Leonardo's practice of the visual arts or, for that matter, the practice of any other artist included in the *Vite*.[123] As he makes clear in his lives of the architect Bramante, the sculptor Silvio Cosini, and the painter Timoteo [Viti] da Urbino, the ability to improvise is a praiseworthy skill which is virtually exclusive to musical performance. Like Leonardo, Bramante and Timoteo improvised on the *lira da braccio*, while Cosini sung extemporaneously.[124] …

Among *Cinquecento* writers of art history and theory, only the priest-painter Giovanni Battista Armenini takes up the problem of improvisation in the visual arts; his exceptional remarks are contained in his treatise *De' veri precetti della pittura* (On the True Precepts of the Art of Painting), published in Ravenna in 1586. Oriented toward Rome and written as a practical guidebook for artists as well as a lament on the alleged decline of later sixteenth-century Italian painting, Armenini's text offers a richly layered yet ambivalent review of the improvisatory act for those who painted. It is, moreover, a review which is formulated without reference to music even though Armenini occasionally joins painting and music for other purposes in the treatise. Using *De' veri precetti della pittura* as a guide, I want to explore the definition and implications of improvisation in sixteenth-century Italy, consider its benefits and drawbacks for artists and their audiences, and suggest reasons why it could not be embraced wholeheartedly within artistic circles of the period.

Armenini's consideration of improvisation occurs largely in book 1, chapter 9, of his treatise which is devoted to his exposition on *invenzione* (invention), the process by which an artist researches the subject to be depicted and then begins to conceive of it visually.

With his hallmark pessimism intact, he opens the chapter by proposing to outline those *diffetti* (defects) which keep the artist from becoming a *bello inventore* (fine inventor) and initiates the discussion by highlighting the frequent lack of accord between the *verità* (truth) of a given narrative, contained in what he describes as *buone scritture* (good writings), and the image he renders. According to Armenini, this disjuncture is at least in part the result of improvisation by such artists:

> Driven by some capricious fancy and wishing to be considered marvellous... inventors and experienced masters, they suddenly pick up pen or pencil and begin to draw many figures all tangled together. This they do with so much facility and quickness that they put down the most eccentric figures in diverse attitudes and pompous postures. They do not rest until all the space is filled with countless lines. When the work is displayed in the end, it abounds in the

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[123] Giorgio Vasari: *Le vite de 'più eccellenti pittori scultori ed architettori*, Florence 1550, revised ed. 1568.
[124] See in thr Appendix/ Various Lists, List of the supposed Lira da braccio (and some Lute) players

strangest forms of men and things, and one cannot imagine how far removed it is from the subject they are treating and from the composition they were striving for.

In other words, the artist's proclivity for improvisation leads to poor *invenzione* because he is galvanized by his own unlicenced mark making rather than by an authoritative text, and consequently the improvisatory act inhibits him from keeping the subject of his *invenzione* sharply focused in his mind's eye. …

But since working speedily was a highly controversial mode of artistic production during the *Cinquecento*, it was often perceived in a negative light, and this perception is reflected in Armenini's treatise. As he indicates in this section, there are times when rapid rendering might be tolerated, as when decorating temporary structures built to stage royal entries and weddings, feasts, plays, pageants, and the like[125] for these must be executed on a tight schedule and are intended to last for only a short period of time. Later in the treatise he advocates working with *prestezza* when drawing from the live model who can hold a pose for only so long or when painting with the quick-drying medium of fresco. …

Having unequivocally rejected improvisation as a means of initiating an *invenzione*, Armenini nonetheless proposes that it is a useful studio technique to generate an appropriate composition through which the *invenzione* will be communicated. In this instance, improvisation provides the artist with a mode of working which compensates for what Armenini describes as his inability to conceive of a fully formed or well-ordered *invenzione* since it allows him to transfer a variety of compositional possibilities from his imagination to paper "*in un tempo brevissimo*" ("in a very short time"). From these *primi pensieri* (first thoughts), he develops the final composition which will ultimately be transferred to painting. Here, Armenini justifies the improvisatory act by proposing that it be patterned after the example of the poet. …

Hence, we read in *De' veri precetti della pittura* that just as the poet may begin to compose a verse through improvisatory activity, so too may the painter begin to structure a visual composition in this manner. The *schizzi* or *bozze* (sketches) which the artist executes as a result are understood by Armenini to represent only an intermediate step toward artistic perfection rather than an end in and of themselves. …

Armenini's analogy connecting the improvisatory techniques of the painter and poet is strongly reminiscent of Leonardo's own statement on the subject contained in what has come to be called the *Trattato della pittura (Treatise on Painting)*:

> Now, have you never considered how poets compose their verses? It does not annoy them, just because they have written beautiful letters, to erase some of their verses, then writing them out again better. Therefore, painter, compose the parts of your figures arbitrarily, then attend first to the movements representative of the mental attitudes of the creatures composing your narrative painting, rather than to the beauty and goodness of the parts of their bodies. Because you must understand that if such an unfinished composition turns out to be consistent with your invention, it will satisfy all the more when afterward it is adorned with the perfection appropriate to all its parts.

Moreover, traces of the improvisatory technique which they both describe as a way of materializing the production of the intellect are evident in such preparatory *schizzi* as Leonardo's *Study of the Virgin and Child with St. Anne and the Infant St. John the Baptist with Studies of*

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[125] Like familiar *intermedi*.

Machinery, which was executed c.1508 (fig. 1). These images were considered innovative for the time in their extensive *pentimenti* (changes or, literally, repentances) made possible and enhanced by Leonardo's adoption of the malleable and fluid drawing media of chalk and pen and ink.

Example III-20, Korrick fig.1. Leonardo da Vinci, Study of the Virgin and Child with St. Anne and the Infant St. John the Baptist with the study of machines (recto), c. 1508. Pencil and brown ink with gray wash over black chalk; some white reinforcement. London, British Museum. Alinari /[126]

Of the several illustrations which Armenini provides, it is only in the case of Michelangelo that improvised image-making clearly does not require additional finishing techniques to legitimize the work.

In Armenini's view, an improvised image might equally be a finished image within this artist's oeuvre, and thus his production provides a potential escape from the tension Armenini otherwise posits between the two in his chapter on *invenzione*. Michelangelo, he informs his reader, was once asked by a Ferrarese youth to whom he was indebted for firing some earthenware to draw for him on the spot a standing Hercules figure in exchange. With Armenini and others also in attendance, Michelangelo soon set to work and produced the image impromptu. After praising its *finito* (finished quality), Armenini concludes his account with the observation that "those who had seen him do the work in such a short time, a work which others would have judged could be made only with a month's effort, were completely amazed". Through this statement, Armenini suggests that as long as the fundamental visual characteristics of improvisational rendering are immediately camouflaged under the veneer of *fine*, the act of improvisation itself is still acceptable and even functions as a viable procedure which allows virtuoso artists to demonstrate their extraordinary worth. …

Distinctions between improvisation as performance and improvisation as a studio tool for locating the composition of a given invention are drawn through a variety of details which Armenini attaches to Michelangelo's feat. First, the artist is said to have executed the work in a public space, behind the Vatican church of new Saint Peter's rather than in his closely-guarded workshop in the vicinity of Trajan's Forum. Further, it is a space closely tied to the most public of his professional projects during the latter part of his life; Michelangelo served as superintendent of the project to erect the church on the site of the old Early Christian basilica from 1547 until his death. Second, he performed the improvisatory act for an audience which included not only Armenini and the youth but an unspecified number of others. And third, in Armenini's telling, Michelangelo was decidedly aware of his audience and even played to its members to some extent. After moving to a bench sheltered by a small roof, he struck a pose designed to signal that the performance had begun:

> "He put his right foot on the bench, his elbow on his raised knee, and his hand against his face, and remained awhile in thought. Then he began to draw the figure . . .". When he was done, Michelangelo gestured to the youth to come forward out of the audience to accept the image and then left the vicinity alone, a departure from the stage, so to speak.

Armenini's report is likely apocryphal. There is no drawing of Hercules in Michelangelo's extant oeuvre which might be related to it, nor is the incident recorded in any other extant contemporary source. Yet it rings true if only because it fits convincingly with the artist's knowledge of the

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[126] See Music Examples A. Ch. III-20 Korrick Fig.1.

performative aspect of improvisation in music which might have made him sensitive to the possibility of a counterpart in the visual arts even if he could not necessarily name it.

It is now well established that improvisational performance was an integral part of Florentine musical practice by the later Quattrocento and was heavily promoted at the Medici court where Michelangelo lived and studied from 1489 to 1492. According to Ascanio Condivi, Michelangelo's only authorized biographer, the last years of the century saw him establish a friendship with the Medici-sponsored Flemish musician Jean Cordier, who sang *all' improvviso* *"maravigliosamente"* ("marvelously") while accompanying himself on the *lira da braccio.* By 1515, Michelangelo had joined the Sacra Accademia of the Medici, a Platonic literary group with what appears to have been an active musical program reflecting the Florentine taste for improvisation.[127]

In fact, the academy's *perpetuo cytharedo* (lutenist in perpetuity), Atalante Migliorotti, as well as one of its protectors, Bernardo Accolti, were renowned improvisational singers with reputations which extended well beyond the city's borders.[128] With these many opportunities to experience musical improvisation it is no surprise that Michelangelo would have developed an appreciation for it. This is documented in the autobiography of the goldsmith and sculptor Benvenuto Cellini, begun in 1558, who records that Michelangelo's delight in the extemporized (and beautiful) singing of Luigi Pulci in the streets of Florence was so great that he regularly joined those who followed his performances.[129]

But all this, I think, would have been of relatively little interest to Armenini, who had a larger point to make about the nature of performed improvisation and its production in recounting the Michelangelo-Hercules story. This point can be ascertained once we acknowledge how readily Michelangelo's alleged execution of a finished image in this manner calls to mind a mode of presentation already codified in Baldassare Castiglione's influential handbook on noble behaviour and activity, *Il libro del cortegiano (The Book of the Courtier)*, completed at the court of Urbino by c.1516 and published in Venice in 1528.

As is well known, the handbook is written in the form of a dialogue between various personalities in attendance at the court. In book 1, Count Ludovico Canossa is asked by Cesare Gonzaga to speak on *grazia* (grace), that quality which the courtier was to exhibit in all endeavours. It is also an aesthetic quality which, as we have noted, Armenini explicitly associates with the finish of Perino's drawing, but here the emphasis is on *grazia* as a modifier of action. …

It is evident that Canossa's speech underlining the importance of *grazia* operates as a warning to avoid the *goffezza* that Armenini was fearful would mar improvisatory or, in the hands of less virtuosic talents, what we might call slapdash artistic production. More importantly, it reveals that when performing *all' improvviso*, the conscious mind is hard at work in advance and at the moment of the improvisatory act even if, in the best of circumstances, its production appears otherwise. And Canossa reiterates this as he presents a series of concrete illustrations displaying the way in which experts handle weapons, dance, sing, and paint when they know they are being observed. The last two activities—singing and painting—are particularly closely related, and for

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[127] About same muscian and Lorenzo de' Medici, see in the Chapter 6, p.55.

[128] According to Blake Wilson, both of them sang to the *lira da braccio*; see in the Chapter 6., p.59. Migliorotti and p.61. Accolti.

[129] See latter in Chapter 6 and 7.

each of these Canossa stresses the deceptive effortlessness of the expert, the apparently aleatory quality of the performance, and, most crucially, its impact on the audience:

> A singer who utters a single word ending in a group of four notes with a sweet cadence, and with such facility that he appears to do it quite by chance, shows with that touch alone that he can do much more than he is doing. Often too in painting, a single line which is not laboured, a single brush stroke made with ease and in such a manner that the hand seems of itself to complete the line desired by the painter, without being directed by care or skill of any kind, clearly reveals the excellence of craftsmanship, which people will then proceed to judge, each by his own lights.

From the *Cinquecento* perspective, then, we may now differentiate between publicly performed improvisation and improvisation as a studio technique employed more or less privately by referring to the former as one which the artist counterfeits. It is conceived as a virtuosic display deliberately feigned for the pleasure of both the performer and his audiences. The discerning audience enjoys the performance precisely because its members realize that it is generally hard won. With this in mind, Armenini's passing remark that Michelangelo put his hand to his head and thought *un poco* (a little) before he began to improvise the Hercules takes on more significance; the pose functions as a sign of the preparation which lies behind the performance for those who are able to read it. In contrast, the audience which accepts the performance at face value will not decipher the signal and will instead simply marvel at the image which the delusively spontaneous and effortless action produces.

That Armenini wished to represent performed improvisation as being to some degree premeditated is supported when considered beside two statements he offers on the artist's training regimen in this same chapter. In each case, he underlines the importance of developing a repertoire of stock <u>mental</u> images which can then be mined and expressed through the hand as required.[130] Referring to Giulio's[131] extemporaneous drawing practice, Armenini reports

> "one could say that he was copying a subject in front of his eyes rather than composing from his own ideas. His style was so near to, and in conformity with, the ancient sculpture of Rome, to which he had studiously devoted much time while he was a youth, that what he placed and formed on paper seemed to be exactly drawn from those works".

In discussing how less mature artists might cultivate the type of repertoire Giulio already had in mind, Armenini writes:

> I strongly advise you to draw every day without fail so that you will be able to express with great facility what you have imagined ... One stimulates the mind with various sketches on paper, which must be made in several ways—at times drawing something of one's own, and at times something else; at other times imitating someone else's works and making them one's own in different styles and ways, as well as with different materials. This is to be done so that all these methods will be at one's command when the occasion demands. …

In nuce, Armenini's concept of improvisation as presented in *De' veri precetti della pittura*, assumes that drawing is the medium through which the act will be effected—and, more specifically, through that tradition of drawing generally associated with central Italy. Therefore, while improvisation could be employed as a studio technique which allowed the artist to begin

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[130] About "mental images and places" see later in chapter 6 and 7.
[131] Giulio Romano (Giulio Pippi, 1499 - 1546), painter from Rome. See Music Examples A. Ch. III-21 Korrick fig.2.

developing his composition, the resulting *schizzi* were understood merely as stepping stones to more elaborately finished *disegni* which Armenini favoured— consider, for example, Perino's rendering of The Evangelist Luke (fig. 3)—and which were increasingly produced by artists as demonstration pieces and collectors' items. In book 2, chapter 6, Armenini calls the most refined of this type of drawing the *ben finito cartone* (well-finished cartoon). What is more, the mere

Example III-22, Korrick Fig. 3. Perino del Vaga, Evangelist Luke, c.1540. Black chalk with gray wash. Prepared for the Cappella del Crocifisso, San Marcello al Corso, Rome; painted by Daniele da Volterra. Paris, Musée du Louvre. Reunion des Musées Nationaux /[132]

existence of *schizzi* generated through such improvisation required justification by analogy to the poet's working method. And when the artist performed an improvisation before an audience, he was obliged to furnish a drawing exhibiting *fine* almost immediately. Hence, performed improvisation was to be a highly precise and conscious act; for Armenini, it was a virtuoso technique fraught with danger, forcing him to advocate that it remain in the domain of those very few artists capable of producing finished images without "false starts" or preliminary sketches.

…

As Hazel Smith and Roger Dean have argued for the later twentieth century, improvisation is seldom a totally spontaneous act because it requires skill and practice. They recognize that "most improvisors have a bank of 'personal cliches' to which they resort" and contend that the success of the act depends on the size of the bank and the ability of the improvisor to reorganize and transfigure those cliches. Smith and Dean also distinguish between what they call "pure" or performed improvisation which engages an audience and "applied" improvisation which occurs in private and is but one step of several required to produce a work—"perhaps on a canvas," they suggest coincidentally.

If Armenini's attempt to identify and articulate the nature of visual improvisation in central Italy toward the close of the sixteenth century is awkward, contradictory, and even at times elusive, it nonetheless foreshadows the discussion which has again attached itself to the problem of artistic improvisation at a moment when the implications of these same characteristics are being championed. Thus at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the importance of Armenini's contribution lies both in the light it sheds on improvisation in the *Cinquecento* and in the context it may now offer for contemporary debate on the subject.

To remember and repeat:

[GENERAL ON ORNAMENTATION] p.2

[HORSLEY] p.4: broad musical characteristics that separated Renaissance usage from succeeding ornamental practices, a list.

[THOMAS] p.4 On EM studies today (1992)

[HORSLEY] p.15. Maffei's rules

[MARUNOVIĆ, p.18] Lodovico Zacconi (*Prattica di Musica*, II, 1622):

[NEGATIVE ON ORNAMENTATION] pp.26-28

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[132] See Music Examples A. Ch. III-22 Korrick Fig.3

ORNAMENTATION: GRACES AND PASSAGI, pp.28-30, summary on p.31, mus. Examples (in Appendix) p.31.

[ORNAMENTATION & IMPROVISATION IN MEDIEVAL MUSIC] Mattes, p.35
[MARIANI] p.38. Improvisation in Medieval Music

Reading recommendations:

BROWN, H.M.: *Embellishing Sixteenth-century Music*, … see Appendix, 8.1.GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

CANGUILHEM, Philippe: *L' Improvisation polyphonique à la Renaissance*, … see 8.1. Ibid

CANGUILHEM, Philippe: Improvisation as concept … see 8.1. Ibid

A Performer's Guide to Medieval Music, ed. Ross DUFFIN … see 8.1. Ibid

ENGELKE, Ulrike: *Musik und Sprache/ Music and Language*, … see 8.1. Ibid

HORSLEY, Imogene: Improvised Embellishment in the Performance of Renaissance Polyphonic Music, ... see 8.1. Ibid

MARIANI, Angela: *Improvisation and Inventio in the Performance of Medieval Music*, … see 8.1. Ibid

Improvisation in the arts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, ed: McGee, Timothy J., … see 8.1. Ibid