



»... in das verlorene Paradies.«

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*Festschrift
in memoriam*



Annette Otterstedt

zum 70. Geburtstag

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in memoriam
Annette Otterstedt**

**zum 70. Geburtstag
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herausgegeben von Andreas Schlegel

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Douce memoire: Virtuoso Viol Playing in the 16th Century¹

Joëlle Morton

In the *Book of the Courtier* (1528), Baldassare Castiglione describes musical skill as a desirable ‘virtue’ along with refined speech, ability in riding, courage in military feats, understanding the art of painting and the facility to write well. He gives high praise to music, saying that it fills the soul with sweetness and that singing, especially madrigals where there is a marriage of music and poetry, is both convivial and high-minded recreation. Castiglione then cautions that modesty is essential for a courtier and in order to be truly virtuous, one must participate in music only as a pastime and never in front of a crowd, or for an uneducated audience.² Being considered a ‘virtuoso’ was understood as a term of honour, reserved for that rare person who was both distinguished by exceptional physical and artistic skill, but who also exhibited impeccable moral and intellectual qualities. Implicitly, one also needed to be of elevated social rank... Giulio Cesare Brancaccio, of noble birth from Naples, was a courtier to Alfonso II in Ferrara where his bass voice was hugely valued, but he considered musical performance beneath him, preferring instead to be lauded for military prowess.³ Similarly, Fabrice Dentice at the household of Ottavio Farnese in Parma, though an exceptional lutenist, was never listed on the musical payroll with the other hired help.⁴

Musicmaking during the Renaissance contributed to intellectual wealth and social grace and the cultured worldliness of the *uomo universale*. Private salons (*ridotti and accademici*) held in patrician circles were the proving grounds for new ideas and experimentation by leading thinkers, as well as a source of entertainment. There would be recitations of poetic verse, discussion of the latest philosophical ideas, music by specialists and amateurs, playing of games and gambling, and of course, lots of posturing and blatant attempts at political one-upmanship and heated argumentation.⁵ Palladian villas of the Veneto region that were built during the second half of the *cinquecento* were decorated with frescos illustrating many of these diversions. Several depict musical gatherings where large bass viols are prominent (Fig. 1 & 2).

The abilities of experts who were of intellectual and social standing to be able to mingle with the elite were desirable enhancements for a noble *famiglia*. Some of these cultural attendants were born into artistic families or of minor nobility, but the act of becoming a *familiere* in a prestigious house brought its own social advancement.⁶ One had to tread lightly, however; *signori* and *damigelle* were never on par with the host or his invited guests. A case in point, Tarquinia Molza at the Ferrarese court as lady-in-waiting to Duchess Margherita had her residency cut short after the discovery of an amorous affair with composer Giaches de Wert in 1589. The problem lay not with Tarquinia’s behaviour (she was of noble stature), but because de Wert was considered beneath her.⁷

1 This article is offered ‘in sweet memory’ of Annette Otterstedt, whom I first met (as well as Hans Reiners) at a conference in Michaelstein. I have counted on them for more than 20 years for their incredibly ‘considered’ opinions on a multitude of subjects, and am only sorry that in this current instance, Annette is not here to weigh in about my subject: people and matters that she cared about deeply.

2 Baldassare Castiglione, *Il Cortegiano*, Venice, 1528. Translation in Carol MacClintock, *Readings in the History of Music in Performance*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, p. 26–27.

3 Richard Wistreich, *Warrior, Courtier, Singer: Giulio Cesare Brancaccio and the Performance of Identity in the Late Renaissance*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.

4 Seishirō Niwa, *Duke Ottavio Farnese’s Chapel in Parma, 1561–1586*, Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate School of International Christian University, 2002.

5 Timothy A. Collins, ‘Musica Secreta Strumentali. The Aesthetics and Practice of Private Solo Instrumental Performance’, in : *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, vol. 35/1 (2004), p. 47–62.

6 Laurie Stras, ‘Musical Portraits of Female Musicians at the Northern Italian Courts in the 1570s’, chapter 7 in : *Art and Music in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Katherine A. McIver, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003, p. 147.

7 Laurie Stras, ‘Recording Tarquinia: imitation, parody and reportage...’, in : *Early Music*, vol. 27/3 (1999), p. 358.



Fig. 1: Giovanni Antonio Fasolo: *The Little Concert*, c1570. Villa Caldogno.

Few descriptions of household events chronicle specific performances, names of ‘soloists’ or the pieces that were played, but *ridotti* were one of the few places where non-sacred chamber music could be ‘performed’, albeit to a small and exclusive public. The second part of Antonfrancesco Doni’s *Dialogo della musica* is unusual for its detail, describing a Venetian academy in 1544 where ‘a music of viols and wind instruments ... played by Signor Matteo Romano with the violone, you know how divinely he plays it; Signor Perissone [Cambio] will sing there... Signor Paolo Vergelli, who excels on the traverse flute; ... Signor Jacopo, Signor Cecchino with the viola; ... the divine Antonio da Cornetto, who is altogether perfect; I [Girolamo Parabosco] shall play [the cembalo] and Signor Domenico Rossetto will play the lute; Signor Francesco will sing with his astounding bass voice; and Signor Battista dal Fondaco will take part with his cornetto which he plays so marvellously...’⁸ Vocal music was commonplace at these events and the proliferation of printed editions dedicated to patrician patrons would attest to that medium’s popularity. In an era dominated by vocal performance, 16th century instrumentalists naturally drew upon pre-existing vocal music, both as a direct resource and as foundation for newer creations.

The term *viola bastarda* first appeared in Girolamo Dalla Casa’s 1584 didactic manual *Il vero modo di diminuir*⁹ and was in use until the middle of the following century appended directly to more than 50 pieces. I recently documented¹⁰ the variety that is found in those sources and observed that similar variety can be found in the dozen pieces marked *alla bastarda* (for voice, trombone and lute). For the past several decades, players and scholars have centred on the works that decorate multiple voices of a preexisting

8 Alfred Einstein, *The Italian Madrigal*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1949, p. 197–198.

9 Girolamo Dalla Casa. *Il vero modo di diminuir, con tutte le sorti stromenti*, Venice, 1584.

10 Joëlle Morton, ‘Redefining the Viola Bastarda: A Most Spurious Subject’, in: *The Viola da Gamba Society Journal*, vol. 8 (2014), p. 1–64. <https://vdgs.org.uk/journal/Vol-08.pdf> (7.8.2022).



Fig. 2: Giovanni Antonio Fasolo, c1565. Villa Campiglia.

vocal madrigal or chanson that fit on a regular 6-string bass viol.¹¹ But a significant portion of the repertoire requires an instrument with a lower compass down to GG and only some pieces are based on a polyphonic model, of which, not all decorate much more than a single original line. The music is, however, always linear, i.e. non-chordal, and through-composed high art music that utilizes but pushes well beyond a normal bass range. I speculated that the term *bastarda* was originally applied because the bass instrument is called on to assume a purely melodic function, eschewing its otherwise traditional and more simplistic role as polyphonic foundation or accompaniment. From Italy, to north of the alps in German and Polish regions and across the English Channel, there are clear personal, musical and geopolitical connections among the composers, performers, patrons and publishers. At the same time, there are also perfectly logical reasons for the variety that developed.

Cornettist, Girolamo dalla Casa came from a musical family in Udine and from 1568 formed part of the first permanent instrumental ensemble at San Marco in Venice. His 1584 treatise was dedicated to (and possibly financed by) nobleman Count Mario Bevilacqua of Verona, an important member of that city's government. A passionate music-lover, there was a daily *ridotto* at the Palazzo Bevilacqua and entertainments were lavish. Many volumes of music were dedicated to him, and at his death in 1593, his collection of 78 instruments was inventoried: 4 keyboards, 12 viols, 5 lutes, 50 woodwind instruments and two trombones.¹² The primary purpose of Dalla Casa's didactic treatise is to explain ornamentation. Many/most of his pieces are decorations of well-known vocal works that had just been reprinted/republished in 1577 score-form compilations,¹³ greatly facilitating analysis and ornamentation of multiple voices. Dalla Casa's manual was not produced with the education of middle-class children in mind, or for 'serious practitioners' who would have learned their craft directly from a master. Somewhat akin to modern programme notes or CD liner booklets, his materials targeted an elite novice public. This privileged class was literate (able to read) and educated (to understand the subject), with expendable resources (for buying books and instruments) and social connections (in order to hear performances). They gathered at salons (such as Bevilacqua's) where they were able to savour and critique musical specialists (who displayed the kinds of skills that Dalla Casa had clarified for them).

While there are materials in manuscript form, usually copied by players for their own reference, a number of sources for the *viola bastarda* are didactic manuals, by authors, like Dalla Casa, whose main instrument was sometimes other than the viol. Did these authors intend their music to be performed or was it set down

11 Jason Paras, *The Music for Viola Bastarda*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986, and Veronika Gutmann, 'Viola bastarda—Instrument oder Diminutionspraxis?', in: *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 35 (1978), Heft 3, S. 178–209.

12 Marcello Castellani, 'A 1593 Veronese Inventory', in: *Galpin Society Journal*, vol. 26 (1973), p. 15–24.

13 Found in: *Tutti i madrigali di Cipriano di Rore a quattro voci*, Venice, 1577, and *Musica di diversi autori*, Venice, 1577.

purely for demonstrative purposes? Previous studies have focused on this repertoire with minimal reference to actual *bastarda* players. So my goal here is to consider context for whom this early viol music was written, and where it was performed.

The first instruction manual specifically for the viol, *Regola rubertina / Lettione seconda* was authored by another Venetian cornetto player, Silvestro Ganassi.¹⁴ Born in 1492, he was a member of the *pifferi del Doge* and bore the nick name 'dal Fontego' based on his neighbourhood of residence. His books are dedicated to Ruberto Strozzi (hence 'Rubertina') and Neri Capponi, both 'fuoruschiti', Florentine nobility in exile, and both great patrons of the arts. In his Venetian villa in 1538 Capponi established what became the city's most sophisticated musical academy, headed by Adrian Willaert and graced by *virtuosa*, soprano Polissena Pecorina.¹⁵ In Cap. XX of *Lettione*, Ganassi names viol players Alfonso da Ferrara, Ioanbattista Cicilian, Francesco da Milano and Rubertino Mantoano; they were 'experts' whom he had heard play diminutions beyond the frets up to the very end of the fingerboard. This confirms that even before any specific musical sources are to be found employing the *bastarda* term, the viol was already known in an advanced melodic capacity by players from all over northern Italy and as far away as Sicily.

Active in Naples and head of the aristocratic Dentice delle Stelle family, Luigi Dentice served at the court of Ferrante Sanseverino, Prince of Salerno.¹⁶ He and the Prince were friends as far back as 1527 when they were both members of the Siense *Accademia degli Intronati*, and together, they founded a similar institution in Naples in 1546. From 1540, Dentice was in charge of musical and theatrical activities at the palace as well as disbursing the Prince's gambling debts and providing other diplomatic services. A *discorso* at the church of San Lorenzo in 1547 incited an uprising of Neapolitan aristocrats against the viceroy, Don Pedro Alvarez de Toledo. Though it was a failed coup, the Sanseverino property was confiscated, and in 1552, to avoid being sentenced to death, he fled, taking with him Luigi and his lutenist son Fabrizio, his 'man of arms and letters' Giulio Cesare Brancaccio, and his secretary Bernardo Tasso and son Torquato (the future poet). They joined the household of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese in Rome before Fabrizio moved to the court at Parma, and Brancaccio and Torquato went to Ferrara. Though none of these people wrote music for the viol, by the 1570s they were all closely connected to others involved with the *bastarda* repertoire at northern courts.

Diego Ortiz came to the Italian peninsula in the early 1550s as a military man: *Hombre de Armas en la Compañía de S. E. el Virrey* i.e. Viceroy Pedro de Toledo. By 1558, he was *maestro de capilla* of the vice regal chapel in Naples, a position that he retained through a succession of governors until c1570. His 1553 *Trattado de glosas*¹⁷ was dedicated to Pedro Jordán de Urríes y Lanuza, Señor de Ayerbe y Lanazu, Argguis y Nuevo (Aragon, Spain), who was married to Ana Veintemilla y Clacena, Baronesa de Riesi y Capua (Sicily). Preceding Dalla Casa by 30 years, Ortiz's is also a didact treatise about ornamentation, with the second half consisting of pieces for the bass viol.¹⁸ Two versions of the *Trattado* were produced, the first entirely in Castilian Spanish, the second with introductory material translated into Italian. That he wrote in his native language should be seen as an indication of his intended audience whether back in Spain, in the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily, or for Spanish nobility and their entourages in Europe.

Ortiz's music is cherished by players today and considered the first examples for the *viola bastarda* (though not labeled with that term). He may not, however, have been so widely known in his own day. In February 1568, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese stopped in Naples on his way to Sicily and auditioned some of the city's finest singers, since his younger brother Duke Ottavio (of Parma) was an avid patron of musicians. He

14 Silvestro Ganassi, *Regola Rubertina and Lettione seconda*, Venice, 1542–1543.

15 Martha Feldman, *City Culture and the Madrigal at Venice*, Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1995, p. 25.

16 Dinko Fabris and John Griffiths, *Neapolitan Lute Music*, Middleton, Wis.: A-R Editions, 2004.

17 Diego Ortiz, *Trattado de glosas*, Rome, 1555.

18 Annette Otterstedt, ed. and preface to Diego Ortiz, *Trattado de glosas*, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2003.



Fig. 3: Tiziano Vecelli (Titian), *Pedro de Toledo*, 1542, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich

heard a contralto Vittoria Moschella, whose husband 'is among the first-class musicians in Naples in composition and in playing the *basso di viola*. He was the chapel master to the viceroy for a period. In my opinion, this husband and wife can please your excellency.'¹⁹ Ironic that just 15 years after his treatise had been published, Diego was not recognized by name! With or without his wife, he did move north, to become a *familiare* at the court of Marcantonio II Colonna in Rome serving from April 1572 until September 1576.²⁰

The Dalla Viola family served at the Este court in Ferrara as far back as 1467 and by their third generation, several family members played the viol. Alfonso dalla Viola was salaried from 1525 and member of the ducal chapel from 1530–1540, and was director and composer for musical entertainments that were part of lavish banquets produced by Cristoforo Messisbugo.²¹ A single leaf

manuscript entitled *il modo de sonar il violon secondo alfonso de la viola*, c1560, explains how three different sizes of viols were tuned in relation to each other to play in consort.²² In addition to the Ganassi quote above, Luigi Dentice mentioned him as 'miraculous at counterpoint and composition and in performing the *viola d'arco* in consort'.²³ He and his brother Andrea served time in prison for murdering the wife and daughter of court singer and copyist Zoanne Michele; they requested and received a pardon from Duke Ercole II in 1544.²⁴ Another family member, Francesco, was similarly imprisoned, but sprung in 1539 by Cardinal Ippolito II (Ercole II d'Este's brother) and granted a benefice in 1559.²⁵ The family must have held special status, not least to be treated with leniency for grievous offences. No viol music has survived by any of the family members, but Alfonso was clearly known from Venice to Naples as a player of note.

Born in 1543 into a musical family at the Bentivoglio court in Bologna, Alfonso Ferrabosco (i) and his family moved to the patronage of Charles de Guise, Cardinal of Lorraine in France, 1555. He and two younger brothers were memorialized by the poet Pierre de Ronsard in 1558 for singing to their own accompaniment *sur trois lyres* and by 1562, Alfonso had been recruited to England as one of Elizabeth I's musicians. He spent much of his career across the Channel, but with intermittent trips back to the continent,

19 Seishirō Niwa, 'Cardinal Alessandro Farnese's involvement in music', in: *Early Music*, vol. 42/1 (Feb. 2014), p. 110 and original letter in Giuseppe Berini, 'Composizioni della Libreria farnesiana e la musica alla corte di Ottavio Farnese', in: Marco Capra, ed., *A Messer Claudio, musico. Le arte molteplici di Claudio Merulo da Correggio (1533–1604) tra Venezia e Parma*, Venice: Marsilio, 2006, p. 73–74.

20 Valerio Morucci, *Baronial Patronage of Music in Early Modern Rome*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 22 and footnote 18.

21 Lewis Lockwood, *Music in Renaissance Ferrara 1400–1505*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 105.

22 Kathleen Moretto Spencer and Howard Mayer Brown, 'How Alfonso della Viola tuned his viols, and how he transposed', in: *Early Music*, vol. 14/4 (1986), p. 521–533.

23 Luigi Dentice, *Due dialoghi*, Naples, 1552, p. 33: *Alfonso della Viola, il quale non è meno miracoloso nel contrapunto & nel comporre, che nel sonare la Viola d'arco in consorto.*

24 Jessie Ann Owens, ed., *The Italian Madrigal in the Sixteenth Century*, vol. 5–6, *Alfonso dalla Viola*, New York: Garland, 1990, xi.

25 James Haar, 'Dalla Viola family', in: *Grove Music Online* (23.12.2020).

including time in Rome serving Cardinal Farnese, and in Turin serving the Duke of Savoy. His connections were both musical and diplomatic, with figures on both sides of the religious divide during the Counter-Reformation.²⁶ His ability to ‘sing one part and play another on the viol [...] with his eyes intent on the notes of two books, on the words in one book and on the frets for the other is something so difficult that it is almost impossible’ was chronicled by Francesco Patrizi in 1577.²⁷ Five works for *viola bastarda* in the Merro partbooks²⁸ are dated after Alfonso’s death (1588); these were likely authorized by his son Alfonso (ii) but several are based on Italian madrigal *contrafacta* that Alfonso senior had ‘Englished’ for Musica Transalpina.²⁹ The Ferrabosco family, along with Angelo Notari (from Padua, also in residence at the English court) provide an entirely reasonable explanation for the appearance of *viola bastarda* works in England.

I have written elsewhere in detail about Orazio *dalla viola* Bassani, Francesco Patrizi (and his description of *maraviglia*), Tarquinia Molza, Livia d’Arco, Guilia Avogadri and Vincenzo Bonizzi, who were all active from the 1570s until the end of the decade, tied to the *musica secreta* at the *Castello Estense* in Ferrara for private entertainments of Duke Alfonso II d’Este and his sister Lucrezia, the Duchess of Urbino.³⁰ Many of the *viola bastarda* pieces by Orazio and Bonizzi (nine by each) require a large instrument tuned with low AA and GG, and since there are a number of players and composers directly affiliated with this music, one must assume that the large size was common in Parma and Ferrara and not a problem for players, let alone women. Several *bastarda* pieces are based on vocal models/texts of very special personal significance to Lucrezia. The viol parts primarily embellish the bass lines of madrigals and chansons by composers that the court knew personally, though regularly changing the register of the original line. Extremely florid passagework is alternated with sections that revert to the slow-moving rhythm of the original model. This not only breaks up an endless ‘spew’ of ornamentation, but allows a listener to lock ears into motives and brings them in on the joke to better marvel at the performer’s genius for disguising/distorting material that is otherwise familiar. A passion for riddles, playful clues and esoterica are common in Ferrarese music of all types.³¹ Patrizi described the challenge of reading from multiple part books, so Orazio and Bonizzi’s music, based on pieces that have as many as six lines, would be considered a true marvel. A bass player who had learned music in its consort setting would need substantial preparation to become familiar with all those other lines to know them well enough to reference and embellish them, skipping from one to the other at breakneck speed. This logistic sets the *viola bastarda* repertoire apart from treble instrument *passaggi* that ornament a single line. Most likely the highly skilled players prepared their divisions in advance and then performed from memory in front of their courtly audience; this would be in keeping with the practice of the celebrated singers of Alfonso’s *concerto delle donne*.

As mentioned above, precise details of noble entertainments were often carefully guarded. Neri Capponi was notoriously tight-fisted with music at his salons, controlling the dissemination of Willaert’s works.³² Alfonso II in Ferrara took a similar approach, to the extent that the works of Luzzasco Luzzaschi were rarely shared or published, even after Alfonso’s death.³³ The performances of his *concerto* were the envy of many other courts and Alessandro Striggio (i), for example, was sent specifically to observe and try to copy the new style, reporting back to Grand Duke Francesco de’ Medici in Florence in July 1584.³⁴ In performance, Alfonso is said to have

26 John V. Cockshoot and Christopher D. S. Field. ‘Ferrabosco family’, in: *Grove Music Online* (11.10.2020).

27 Francesco Patrizi, *L’Amorosa filosofia*, 1577, ed. John Charles Nelson, Florence: Le Monnier, 1963. Francesco Patrizi, *The Philosophy of Love*, translated by Daniela Pastina and John W. Crayton, Xlibris, 2003.

28 GB-Ob MSS Mus. Sch. D.245-7.

29 Andrew Ashbee, ‘John Merro’s Manuscripts Revisited’, in: *The Viola da Gamba Society Journal*, vol. 7 (2013), p. 1–19. <https://vdgs.org.uk/journal/Vol-07.pdf> (7.8.2022).

30 Joëlle Morton, ‘Will wonders never cease? The viola bastarda at the Ferrarese court’, in: *Early Music*, August 2022 (in print).

31 Laurie Stras, *Women and Music in Sixteenth-Century Ferrara*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 79.

32 Martha Feldman, op. cit., p. 26.

33 Laurie Stras, op. cit., p. 1.

34 David Butchart. ‘The Letters of Alessandro Striggio. An Edition with Translation and Commentary’, in: *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, No. 23 (1990), pp. 1–78.

tried to distract his guests from paying overly close attention. Orazio Urbani, a Florentine, reported in 1581: ‘Immediately after dining, a game of cards was begun in which the Duke and myself took part... At the same time music was begun, so that it was necessary for me to simultaneously play cards, listen, admire and to praise the *passaggi, cadenze, tirate* and such things... The party did not last one minute less than four hours.’³⁵ Towards the end of the century, as soloists of many instruments came into fashion, the taste for polyphonic music declined. Giustiniani describes: ‘Formerly the pastime of a consort of viols was much in vogue, but it was discontinued because of the difficulty of keeping the instruments in tune (for not being played frequently they became almost useless), and of getting together the many persons to make up the concert. Then, too, experience has shown that such diversion, with the uniformity of sound and of the consonances, became tiresome rather quickly and was an incentive to sleep rather than to pass the time on a warm afternoon.’³⁶

Large bass instruments were in fact common at this time—they were not ‘double basses’ but rather the true bottom of the viol family and consort.³⁷ This music vastly predates the 7-string viol, but there are abundant theoretical descriptions that describe tunings in AA or GG and instruments that are larger than standard bass viols appear regularly in musical iconography. Details may be omitted or distorted (in any case paintings are not true-to-life photographs), plus humans were smaller in that century, than now. However, an instrument that stands on the floor or where the pegbox extends greatly above the head of the player, would be considered larger than comfortable/feasible for a smaller D tuning. Pure gut strings are also essential to the period, so in order to respond quickly in a manner to match the upper strings, those low notes benefit from a greater string length. Venetian viols by the Ciciliano family and Ventura Linarol have been well documented,³⁸ but many other Italian and Northern instruments are extant from the 16th century. Quite a few have a ‘guitar’ shape, and others, what we would qualify as unusual features, such as festoon shapes or strange sound holes.³⁹ Since these large basses were played in very wealthy settings, they may have been individually and/or elaborately decorated, as one finds with the beautiful the Este harp, that was played by Alfonso’s leading lady Laura Peverara.⁴⁰ Entirely speculative on my part, there are several lavishly decorated large viols extant by English luthier *par-excellence* John Rose from the end of the sixteenth century. Could these originally have been created as *viole bastarde*? In Italy, a large instrument is depicted by Orazio Samacchini in both a preparatory drawing and subsequent painting, with a matching viol that exists from the same period (Fig. 4 & 5).

By the end of the century, Milan was the dominant place for *viola bastarda* music. Paterfamilias, Riccardo Rognoni’s *Passaggi per potersi esercitare nel diminuire*⁴¹ is dedicated to William V, Duke of Bavaria. The frontispiece indicates Riccardo was employed as *musico* for the *Duca di Terranova* [Carlo d’Aragona y Tagliavia, who served as governor of Milan from 1583–1592]. He is listed as a player of the *viola da gamba* as early as 1584,⁴² part of Milan’s *nobiltà* in 1595⁴³ and characterized as an *eccellente suonatore di violino, ed altri strumenti di corda, e da fiato*, and as one of the very earliest writers to document musical practices for the violin, said to have ‘elevated it from the level of a street instrument to that of a court instrument.’⁴⁴

35 Anthony Newcomb, *The Madrigal at Ferrara 1579–1597*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, p. 25: *il desinare immediate si giocava a primiera, dove interveniva il signor Duca [...] ed io : [...] ed in un medesimo tempo si dava principio alla musica, a tal ch’ero io necessitato insieme giocare, udire, lodare e ammirare i passaggi, le cadenze, le tirate e si fatte cose [...]. Questa festa non durava punto meno di quattro ore.*

36 ‘Vincenzo Giustiniani, Discorso sopra la musica’, trans. Carol MacClintock, in: *Musica Disciplina*, vol. 15 (1961), p. 223.

37 Joëlle Morton, ‘The Early History and Use of the G Violone’, in: *Journal of the Viola da Gamba Society of America*, vol. 36 (1999), p. 40–66.

38 Stefano Pio, *Viol and lute makers of Venice 1490–1630*, Venice: Venice Research, 2021.

39 Thomas MacCracken, *Online Database of Historical Viols*, in: *Viola da Gamba Society of America* online. <https://www.vdgsa.org/database-historical-viols> (6.8.2022).

40 Details and pictures are available at: <https://cantiereestense.it/cantiere/personaggio/alfonso-ii-deste/> (10.7.2022).

41 Riccardo Rognoni, *Passaggi per potersi esercitare nel diminuire*, Venice, 1592.

42 Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, *Trattato dell’arte della pittura, scoltura et architettura*, Milan, 1584.

43 Paolo Morigia, *La nobiltà di Milano*, Milan, 1595.

44 Guglielmo Barblan, ‘I Rognoni musicisti milanesi tra il 1500 e il 1600’, in: Joseph Schmidt-Görg, ed., *Anthony van Hoboken. Festschrift zum*



Fig. 4, above: Samacchini drawing, c1570s, Fondation Custodia, Paris. Preparatory study for Samacchini's *Madonna and Child with Saints and Music Making Angels*, oil on canvas, 239 × 233.5 cm, Saltram House, Devon.

Fig. 5, right: large bass viol labelled Pietro di Dardeli, Mantua c1570s, body length 84.8 cm, private ownership.



Riccardo had at least two musician sons. The first, Giovanni Domenico was a priest, organist and composer, *maestro di cappella* at Milan's *San Sepolcro* and his first publication was dedicated to Prospero Lombardo, a Milanese patrician who sponsored domestic academies. The younger Francesco, was from 1608 associated with the Milanese academy of Marco Maria Arese, then director of music to the Prince of Messerano (Piedmont) and by 1613 back in Milan as *Capo Musico d'Instrumenti nella Regia Ducal Corte* and *Santo Ambrosio Maggiore*. In 1614 he published a violin treatise.⁴⁵ In 1619 Borsieri knew him as a flautist and violinist, as well as composer.⁴⁶ He has received most attention for his 1620 *Selva de varii passaggi*,⁴⁷ dedicated to King Sigismund III of Poland; the first part is devoted to the voice and the second to string and wind instruments, including a setting of Lasso's *Susanne ung jour, passer par il Violone Over Trombone alla Bastarda* that descends to low BB flat. Two virtuosic *alla bastarda* vocal works in the volume are credited to *Molto Illustrre* Ottavio Valera; like other *bastarda* pieces associated with Valera, neither is based on pre-existing polyphony. Giovanni Paolo Cima's 1610 *Concerti Ecclesiastici* was dedicated to this singer, confirming that like Brancaccio, he was a nobleman.⁴⁸

75. *Geburtstag*, Mainz: Schott, 1962, p. 22.

45 Francesco Rognoni, *Aggiunta del scolaro di violino & altri strumenti*, Milan, 1614 (lost).

46 Girolamo Borsieri, *Supplimento della nobilita di Milano*, Milan, 1619.

47 Francesco Rognoni, *Selva dei varii passaggi secondo l'uso moderno, per cantare et suonare con ogni sorte de stromenti, divisi in due parti*, Milan, 1620.

48 Robert Kendrick. *The Sounds of Milan, 1585–1650*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 187–188.

The Rognoni family members appended ‘Taeggio’ (an alpine region in Lombardy) to their name starting in 1605 and the honorary titles of Papal Knight and hereditary Count Palatine were received by Francesco late in his career, first mentioned in his 1624 publication, that was dedicated to Archduke Karl of Austria. Contrary to modern assertions, there is no documentation to show that Francesco was ever in Poland, or employed in the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth.⁴⁹ But the materials in both Riccardo and Francesco’s treatises bear a definite link to the northern Habsburgs, and a Tridentine feature in their music, where titles of some popular madrigals are assigned new Latin titles to disguise the ornamented versions of secular material.

Sacred *contrafacta* are found in other diminution sources. Giovanni Battista Bovicelli⁵⁰ does something similar in 1594, as does Adam Jarzębski.⁵¹ Jarzębski’s first employment dates to 1612–1615 at the court of Elector Johann Sigismund Hohenzollern in Brandenburg. He then spent a year in Italy before taking permanent employment at Sigismund III’s court in Warsaw as an architect (in 1635 he oversaw the construction of the royal palace at Ujazdów). The *sine-qua-non* author for divisions, Jarzębski’s 1627 treble instrument (unspecified) and *bastarda* lines both embellish more than one voice of an original model, even crossing each other. He sometimes writes for two *viole bastarde* at a time, and as in some Italianate sources, not all his pieces are based on pre-existing polyphony. Another northerner, Heinrich Schütz spent formative years (1609–1613) in Venice studying with Giovanni Gabrieli. Shortly after his return to service with the Landgrave Moritz of Hessen-Kassel, Schütz authored a concerted psalm setting, *Wo Gott der Herr nicht bei uns hält*. In true Venetian style, the polychoral work is for three soprano singers, each heading their own little coro, the middle of which is clearly titled *coro 2^{do} di [3] viole bastarde*. Bartolomeo de Selma e Salaverde’s 1638 volume⁵² is likewise dedicated to a northerner, Prince Charles Ferdinand Vasa, Bishop of Wrocław. The many connections, affiliations and similarities between Italy and other regions afford credibility to the *bastarda* materials, albeit in unusual forms, north of the alps.

Musicians were not electronically connected as we are close to 500 years later to video and upload their every whim, but fashions and trends were discussed and passionately followed and emulated. Like a game of ‘Telephone’,⁵³ after six people have passed the message, the story is no longer the same as it began. Details of the practices of private households and academies and courts were carefully guarded, and those outside the circle could only guess and adapt according to their own means. As well as exchange and copying, there was an element of one-upmanship, especially among a social elite. Variety in the *viola bastarda* repertoire should be viewed in this context. The term was employed by entirely credible composers in works they provided for knowledgeable patrons. The composers, performers, publishers and communities that enjoyed different kinds of *bastarda* materials knew each other; it would be a shame to suggest that pieces with seemingly quirky aspects are inauthentic, substandard or deviant, when they are instead elements of great creativity and charm.

49 Bruce Dickey, ‘The Rognoni Family and the Art of Diminution’, preface to: Riccardo Rognoni, *Passaggi per potersi...*, facsimile edition, translation and introduction by Bruce Dickey, Bologna: Forni, 2002, p. 23.

50 Giovanni Battista Bovicelli, *Regole, passaggi di musica*, Milan, 1594.

51 Adam Jarzębski, *Canzoni e concerti a 2, 3, 4 strumenti*. Manuscript: D-B Mus. Ms. Sammlung Bohn 111 (formerly Breslau 111), 1627.

52 Bartolomeo de Selma e Salaverde, *Canzoni, Fantasia et Correnti da sonar ad una, 2.3.4. Con Basso Continuo*, Venice, 1638.

53 Also called ‘Chinese whisps’ by the British, and ‘Stille Post’ by Germans.

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