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# The Viola da Gamba Society of Great Britain 2017-18

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## THE VIOLA DA GAMBA SOCIETY JOURNAL

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## CONTENTS

Editorial	iv
ARTICLES	
Viol Music in the Palazzo Ruffo or How the Viola da Gamba came To Sicily – BETTINA HOFFMANN	1
“The Notes the Double-bass Should Play”: Corrette, continuo, and the Problem of double bass reduction – HEATHER MILLER LARDIN	16
MUSIC REVIEW	
<i>Restoration Music for Three Violins, Bass Viol and Continuo</i> , ed. Peter Holman and John Cunningham ( <i>Musica Britannica</i> vol. 103) – ROBERT THOMPSON	44
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS	49

### Abbreviations used in issues of this Journal:

*GMO Grove Music Online*, ed. D. Root

<<http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com>>.

*IMCCM The Viola da Gamba Society Index of Manuscripts Containing Consort Music*, ed. A. Ashbee, R. Thompson

and J. Wainwright, I (Aldershot, 2001); II (Aldershot, 2008). Now online at

<[www.vdgs.org.uk/indexmss.html](http://www.vdgs.org.uk/indexmss.html)>

*MGG2 Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. L. Finscher

<<http://www.mgg-online.com>>

*ODNB Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. L. Goldman

<[www.oxforddnb.com](http://www.oxforddnb.com)>.

*RISM Repertoire internationale des sources musicales*.

[www.rism.info](http://www.rism.info)

## Editorial

I apologize for the late arrival of the Journal this year. As late as last October we had no material to publish. I am very grateful to Bettina Hoffman for offering to write up her research into a neglected manuscript now in Sweden, but which originally came from Sicily, and to Richard Carter for his expert translation from the original German. Here is new music to add to the known Italian repertory for viola da gamba. I shall add it to the *Thematic Index* for the next up-date in July. Then Heather Miller Lardin kindly offered to re-work some of her research into realisation of continuo parts for the double-bass, wondering whether this would be a suitable topic for the Journal. It seemed to me that it was, given that it is probable that in the eighteenth century, circumstances would sometimes require the substitution of a violone for a double-bass in performance. Her article gives much food for thought and offers detailed instruction from contemporary sources to those required to realise continuo parts on stringed instruments.

I will hope for a bumper crop of articles this year.

Andrew Ashbee

# Viol Music in the Palazzo Ruffo or How the Viola da Gamba came to Sicily

BETTINA HOFFMANN

Translated by RICHARD CARTER

Over the last few years breathtaking discoveries have enriched the viol repertoire with works by heavyweight composers such as Telemann and Abel, in the face of which it is likely that most viol players will have overlooked this comparatively modest and certainly less media friendly find: the Ruffo Family Music Book. That would be a shame, as this book contains eleven technically striking, indeed in parts challenging sonatas for viol and continuo. The manuscript is also of great historical interest, since it, along with some little-noticed archival entries, illuminates a hitherto completely unknown marginal chapter in the history of the viol.



Fig. 1: Abraham Casembroot (Bruges, 1593 or 1598 – Messina, 1658)  
*View of Messina with the Harbour and Palazzata* (Museo regionale di Messina)

## THE MUSIC BOOK

The manuscript, which is held in the *Musik- och Teaterbiblioteket* in Stockholm under the modern Swedish title 'Notbok Ruffo',<sup>1</sup> contains eleven sonatas and sinfonias for a bass instrument, named either as 'Viola', 'Violone' or 'Basso', or not at all, and figured bass. The composer of most of the sonatas is Francesco Ruffo (sometimes 'Fra D[on] Francesco Ruffo'), while Federico (here spelt 'Fiderico') Ruffo and Filippo Muscari contribute respectively one sinfonia and one sonata. The last sonata features in place of the composer's name a set of initials which are ornamented almost to the point of illegibility, but which can be read as 'F.D.F.R.', and thus once again 'Fra Don Francesco Ruffo'. Two of

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<sup>1</sup> S-Skma, C1B-R, 'Notbok, Ruffos. Notbok tillhörig familjen Ruffo?' How the book came to be in this library is not known. I would like to thank the staff of the *Musik- och Teaterbiblioteket* for their assistance. The manuscript was discovered and edited by Fredrik Hildebrand in 2016 (Edition Walhall: Magdeburg, 2016). A second edition, revised according to my suggestions, is in preparation.

the works are dated 1682 and 1690 respectively; this dating towards the end of the seventeenth century is confirmed by copies of roughly contemporary vocal works by Giovanni Bononcini and Alessandro Scarlatti entered on the following pages of the manuscript. The sonatas and sinfonias consist of typically loose sequences of mostly short contrasting sections and dance movements. Federico Ruffo and Filippo Muscari write the solo part as a single line, the sonatas and sinfonias by Francesco Ruffo include double stops and chords of up to five notes, which point to an instrument of the viol family. The Music Book is bound in red leather, embossed with the Ruffo family crest and the initials 'D. P. R.'

The copying in the manuscript is neat, but not professional—some corrections indicate that it is a transcript.<sup>2</sup> The hands of at least three scribes can be identified. The book nevertheless presents a continuous sequence, with the end of one sonata and the start of the next frequently copied on the recto and verso of the same leaf. The continuo is often comprehensively figured, some movements are, however, entirely without figures; there are also a few two-note chords.<sup>3</sup> The notation features some striking idiosyncrasies: for example, the *Sinfonia à Viola Sola* [V] in G has a key signature of two sharps, in the *Sonata à Viola Sola* [VI] the triplets in the 4/4 *Spiritoso* are notated as semiquavers rather than quavers, and in the *Sinfonia à Violone Solo* [XI] the *Giga* has a time signature of C 24/16. The elongated landscape format is also unusual, the book measures 15cm by 8cm, accommodating only four staves per page.

There follows an inventory of the Music Book; to simplify the later discussion I have assigned Roman numerals to the pieces.

- [I] *Sinfonia del Sig: D: Fiderico Ruffo à Viola Sola*, in a  
Adagio – Allegro – Adagio – Largo – Allegro  
ff. 0v-3v  
RISM-Id.: 190023010
- [II] *Sinfonia del Sig: D: Francesco Ruffo | Viola Sola*, in F  
[without tempo indication] – Fuga – Grave – Allegro – Grave – Balletto –  
Giga Presto  
ff. 4-9v  
RISM-Id.: 190023012
- [III] *Sinfonia del Sig: D: Francesco Ruffo*, in D  
Allegro – Prestissimo – Sarabanda – Balletto – Corrente  
ff. 10-13  
RISM-Id.: 190023011
- [IV] *Sonata Del Sig: D: Francesco Ruffo*, in c/C  
Grave – Canzona | Allegro – [without tempo indication] – [without tempo  
indication] – [without tempo indication]  
ff. 13v-17v  
RISM-Id.: 190023015
- f. 18 empty staves

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<sup>2</sup> f. 38r, f. 39r and f. 42v

<sup>3</sup> *Sinfonia* [II] in F, *Balletto*, and *Sonata* [IV] in c, *Grave*

- [V] *Sinfonia à Viola Sola Del Sig: Fra D: Francesco Ruffo*, in G  
Allegro – Arpeggio – [without tempo indication] – Grave – Allegro –  
[without tempo indication] – Allegro – [without tempo indication]  
ff. 19-26  
RISM-Id.: 190023013
- [VI] *Sonata à Viola Sola Del Sig: Fra D: Francesco Ruffo*, in c  
Grave – Allegro – Affettuoso – Spiritoso – Grave – Allegro  
ff. 26v-30v  
RISM-Id.: 190023016
- [VII] *Sonata Del Sig: D: Francesco Ruffo*, in G  
Allegro – Presto – Tremolo | Adagio – Allegro Balletto – Presto  
ff. 31-35  
RISM-Id.: 190023017
- [VIII] *Sonata a Viola Sola | Filippo Muscari*, in a  
[without tempo indication] – Allegro – [without tempo indication] – Presto –  
Allegro – [without tempo indication] – [without tempo indication]  
ff. 35v-36 and ff. 44v-52  
RISM-Id.: 190022185  
Note: on f.35v-36 opening only, on ff. 44v-52 complete.<sup>4</sup> In the second,  
complete version bb. 18-21 are in alto rather than tenor clef in error.
- [IX] *Sonata A Basso Solo Del Sig Fra D: Francesco Ruffo*, in a  
Piano – Largo – Allegro – Grave – Canzona – Balletto Allegro – Spiritoso –  
Presto – Affettuoso  
ff. 36v-44  
RISM-Id.: 190023014
- [X] *li 19 giugno 1682 | Del Ill.mo Sig. F. D. Francesco Ruffo | La Pietra è Paula*, in F  
Grave – Presto – Tremolo – Canzona Allegra  
ff. 52v-56  
RISM-Id.: 190023018  
Note: this sonata may have been intended for the Feast of St Peter and St  
Paul, which falls a few days later, on 29 June. There was a church in Messina  
dedicated to these saints.
- [XI] *Sinf:ª A Violone Solo FDFR: [?] A P:º April:º 1690*, in E $\flat$   
*Così volete, così sarà* | Grave – Fuga, presto – Giga, Prestis:mo – Largo |  
Arpegio stretto dà biscrome – Allegro | Sarabanda  
ff. 56v-60v  
RISM-Id.: 190026992  
Note: the significance of the title ('As you wish it, so will it be') is not clear;  
there is no thematic link with the cantata of the same name by Giacomo  
Carissimi. At the end of this *Sinfonia* is the rubric 'Il Fine', which may be  
taken to refer to the complete sequence of instrumental works.
- [XII] *Del Bononcini | Ch'io ti manchi di fede*  
Cantata for soprano and continuo by Giovanni Bononcini  
ff. 61-71

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<sup>4</sup> It is for this reason that this sonata is placed after the following one and numbered IX in Hildebrand's edition.

RISM-Id.: 190009885

Note: this cantata survives in many other sources, in some ascribed to Alessandro Scarlatti

- [XIII] *Del Bononcini | Se bramate d'amar*  
Aria for soprano and continuo, from Giovanni Bononcini's opera *Xerse*, Rome, 1694  
ff. 71v-73v  
RISM-Id.: 190009884
- [XIV] *Di Scarlatti. Cantata Idealmente | Fingere di non amare*  
Aria for soprano, 2 violins, and continuo, from Alessandro Scarlatti's opera *Tutto il mal non vien per nuocere*, Rome, 1681  
ff. 74-74v, 77 (ff. 75-76 missing)  
RISM-Id.: 190020529
- [XV] *D'Incognito*  
Fragment of a two-part, untexted piece  
ff. 77v-78  
Note: the upper part is notated in soprano clef, the lower in bass clef. This is presumably an Aria for soprano and continuo, despite the upper part lacking a text. Copying was broken off after two pages.  
RISM-Id.: *adest.*
- On the otherwise empty staves of ff. 78v-79v are two incipits and a descending scale, subdivided into groups of four notes, possibly reflecting the violin tuning

#### THE COMPOSERS

First Filippo Muscari, a composer and musician about whose activities a modest amount of information is available. Documents dated 1670-1671 reveal that he was organist at the third organ, *vice maestro di capella* and *maestro di musica* in Messina cathedral.<sup>5</sup> These scant biographical details may be fleshed out from a pasquinade, *Paschino di tutti I compositori et musici di Messina del anno 1666*,<sup>6</sup> a collection of anonymous satirical verse poking fun at musicians in Messina. This suggests that Muscari had for some time been known to his colleagues primarily as a notable drinker, he is presented thus:

VII Filippo Muscari  
Philippo mio da te stesso chieggio  
Qual opra tua composta che sia bella  
Se Bacco sonnolente ogni hor ti veggio.

Philip, my friend, I ask you withal  
Which works of your composing might be pleasing,  
If at all hours I behold you as drowsy Bacchus.

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<sup>5</sup> G. La Corte Cailler, 'Musica e musicisti in Messina', *Quaderni dell'Accademia* (Messina 1982), 129, 233; M. Sansone, 'Italian Baroque Music in Malta: A Madrigal from the Music Archives at the Cathedral Museum in Mdina', *California Italian Studies*, 1(1) (2010), 5, fn. 20.

<sup>6</sup> 'Pasquinade of all the composers and musicians in Messina in the year 1666'. Quoted in F. Longo (Ed.), *Giovanni Antonio Pandolfi [Mealli] da Montepulciano, Sonate [messinesi] a uno e due Violini, Roma 1669* (Società messinese di storia patria: Messina, 2005), XLIX, LII.



Muscari is mentioned by another colleague a few years later, this time less disrespectfully. The violinist and composer Giovanni Antonio Pandolfi Mealli, whose eventful life brought him to Messina at the end of the sixties, published a collection of sonatas and capriccios during his time there in 1669, containing works dedicated to local musicians. Among them is a *Capriccetto Sesto Il Muscari*.<sup>7</sup> In addition to the *Sonata a Viola Sola* in the *Ruffo Notebook*, two or three sacred motets and four secular vocal works by Filippo Muscari are preserved in the Cathedral Library in Mdina, Malta.<sup>8</sup> It is not known whether Muscari himself worked for a time in Malta, or whether his works came to the island via another route such as the Knights of Malta, who were also active in Messina.

Identifying the two Ruffos might seem to be more challenging, since there were (and still are today) many branches of this aristocratic family established on both sides of the Strait of Messina, that is, in the south of Calabria and Messina. Muscari directs our attention to the Messina branch of the family, in which we find Antonio Ruffo e Spatafora (1610-1678), Prince of Scaletta, whose magnificent palazzo was situated on the grand seafront in Messina, known as the *Palazzata* (see Fig. 1). Antonio Ruffo administered and increased his considerable wealth with a sure hand, and is remembered as an art collector and connoisseur, assembling a picture gallery the equal of any in Southern Italy. Works by Rembrandt, Anthony van Dyck, Guido Reni, and Titian—to mention only the best-known—bear witness to his deep understanding, not only of Italian, but also especially of Flemish painting.<sup>9</sup> Ruffo was not only interested in paintings: he established an *Accademia*, a forum for artists, poets, and scholars, which met in his palazzo, and also showed an interest in music. His correspondence with Abraham Brueghel, a Flemish painter active in Italy, not only dealt with paintings, sculptures, tapestries, and other objets d'art, but also frequently touched on musical matters.<sup>10</sup> Brueghel often promised to send works by Roman composers; in particular he mentions arias by Alessandro Stradella, Pietro Paolo Cappellini and Antonio Francesco Tenaglia.<sup>11</sup> These compositions were intended for Antonio's many sons, whose meticulously planned education also extended to music. Brueghel wrote, for example:

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<sup>7</sup> G. A. Pandolfi, *Sonate cioè Balletti, Sarabande, Correnti, Passacagli, & una Trombetta, a uno, e dui Violini con la terza parte della Viola a Beneplacit* (Belmonte: Rome, 1669). A *Trombetta Spatafora* in the same collection is explicitly dedicated to a member of the Ruffo family: 'All'Illustrissimo Sig. Don Francesco Spata Fora Amatore, e Professore della Musica, mio Padrone Osseruandissimo.' In his edition of these sonatas Fabrizio Longo suggests that this Francesco may be a son of Giuseppe Spadafora, from whom, however, no musical activities are documented (Longo, op. cit., XXX, fn. 81).

<sup>8</sup> F. Bruni, *Catalogue of Music Manuscripts at the Cathedral Museum, Mdina-Malta (M-MDca Mus. Ms 1-584)* (Hill Museum & Manuscript Library: Collegeville, 2015) 17-18, 64; <<https://ita.calameo.com/books/004306824c6e8d7ab3ff3>> (accessed Oct. 2018).

<sup>9</sup> V. Ruffo, 'La Galleria Ruffo in Messina nel secolo XVII', *Bollettino d'arte*, X (1916), 21-64, 95-128, 165-192, 237-256, 284-320, 369-388; <<http://www.bollettinodarte.beniculturali.it>> (accessed Oct. 2018).

<sup>10</sup> The correspondence is published in Ruffo, op. cit. For the musical activities of the Ruffo family see D. Costantini and A. Magaudo, 'Musica a Messina in casa Ruffo', *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia*, 20/2 (1985), 277-295.

<sup>11</sup> Ruffo, op. cit., 27, 176-177.

Alli Signori Cavalieri suoi figliuoli così virtuosi manderò quanto prima alcune ariette nuove promesse dalli Musici di questa Corte.<sup>12</sup>

I will as soon as possible send the noble knight's virtuous sons some new ariettas, which the best musicians at this court have promised me.

A certain Francesco Nocetti, friend of the Ruffo family, wrote in 1670:

Erano da me appieno supposti e preveduti i maravigliosi progressi di cotesti miei Sig.ri suoi figli nella Musica di che godo infinitamente, massime riflettendo alla consolazione, che apporta al Padre sì degno il rimirarsi arricchito dalla mano Divina nel Tesoro inestimabile di sì degni e virtuosi figli.<sup>13</sup>

I rejoice endlessly in the marvellous musical progress of my sirs your sons, which I always anticipated and predicted, especially when I consider the pleasure of such a worthy father, who by the hand of God sees himself enriched by the immeasurable treasure of such worthy and virtuous sons.

Four of the sons distinguished themselves musically: Flavio as a violinist and lutenist, Francesco as a composer and viol player, Federico as a harpsichordist, and Antonio, known as Antonino, as a composer.<sup>14</sup> Among these we have undoubtedly identified the remaining two composers of the sonatas and sinfonias in this manuscript: Francesco and Federico Ruffo.

Francesco Ruffo, third son of Antonio Ruffo e Spatafora and his wife Alfonsina Gotho, was born in Messina on 18 October 1649.<sup>15</sup> Just three years later the family initiated the procedure leading to his admission into the Order of the Knights of Malta—for someone of such a young age this must have required a personal dispensation from Pope Innocent X.<sup>16</sup> In 1656 Francesco was formally inducted into the Order and admitted to the Messina Priory.<sup>17</sup> He thus became a friar of the Order, which explains the use of the title 'Fra' ('fratello') in the ascriptions in the manuscript. On reaching their twentieth year, novices were required to undertake naval military service in Malta; Francesco duly left Messina in 1670.<sup>18</sup> Nocetti mentions this in the letter cited above:

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<sup>12</sup> Letter dated 22 May 1665, Ruffo, op. cit., 174.

<sup>13</sup> Ruffo, op. cit., 290.

<sup>14</sup> For Flavio, Francesco, and Federico see Ruffo, op. cit., 27, 174. For Antonino see La Corte Cailler, op. cit., 154.

<sup>15</sup> At this time Sicilians often followed the Spanish custom of taking the surnames of both father and mother; the latter was, however, not passed on to their children. Antonio, the father, was thus Ruffo e Spatafora, his sons are named Ruffo e Gotho in some documents.

<sup>16</sup> F. D'Avenia, *Nobiltà allo specchio Ordine di Malta e mobilità sociale nella Sicilia moderna* (Associazione Mediterranea: Palermo, 2009), 103-104.

<sup>17</sup> Ruffo, op. cit., 187, fn. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Ruffo, op. cit., 290, fn. 2.

Il Sig.re [ ... ] tenga lontano da ogni pericolo il mio Sig.re D. Francesco la cui viola mancando ora al Concerto, sarà certamente di non ordinario pregiudizio.<sup>19</sup>

May the Lord protect my dear Don Francesco from all danger, the future absence of his viola will assuredly be no small loss to the consort.

From this we learn that Francesco played the viola.

During the ill-fated revolt in 1674-1678 against Spanish rule in Messina Antonio Ruffo, who was loyal to Spain, fled first to his feudal estate at Scaletta Castle, and then to Palmi in Calabria.<sup>20</sup> Three of his sons, including Francesco, were taken prisoner by the rebels.<sup>21</sup> In February 1678 Antonio petitioned the Spanish viceroy Johann Joseph von Habsburg for a decoration and a military appointment for his son Francesco, then still a prisoner.<sup>22</sup> Only after the end of the revolt in April 1678 was the family reunited in Messina, Antonio died only a short time later. Francesco held the office of lieutenant of the Messina Priory several times, in 1688 and in 1701-1705.<sup>23</sup> He died in October 1714; in his comprehensive will, there is, alongside assorted valuables and everyday items, much talk of songbirds, which must have been a passion. Only one musical item is listed: he left his youngest brother Giovanni a tromba marina, which he had commissioned in Malta for entertainment purposes on country outings.<sup>24</sup>

The only previously known work by Francesco Ruffo is an *Applauso festivo*, of which just the text incipit survives. This was presumably an occasional cantata or serenade, published in 1707 by the Stamperia Camerale Vincenzo D'Amico in Messina, which must be regarded as lost.<sup>25</sup> In November 1707 Messina celebrated the birth of Louis, Prince of Asturias, first son of Philip V of Spain; for that occasion staging and scenery was erected on the seafront.<sup>26</sup> It is likely that Ruffo's *Applauso festivo* was part of these celebrations. His portrait, listed in the estate of his youngest brother Giovanni,<sup>27</sup> is also regarded as lost.

Federico Ruffo, fourth son of Antonio and Alfonsina, was born on 17 January 1654 in Messina. He too was dubbed a Knight of Malta at the very young age of six years. It is reported that he played harpsichord,<sup>28</sup> but little else is known of his life. He presumably followed much in the footsteps of his brother and fellow

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<sup>19</sup> Ruffo, op. cit., 290

<sup>20</sup> Ruffo, op. cit., 28.

<sup>21</sup> M. C. Calabrese, *L'epopea dei Ruffo di Sicilia* (Laterza: Rome-Bari, 2014), 59.

<sup>22</sup> Calabrese, op. cit., 60.

<sup>23</sup> Avenia, op. cit., 105-106, fn. 20.

<sup>24</sup> Calabrese, op. cit., 85: '[uno strumento] ad arco detto tromba marina [ ... ] per divertirsi in campagna'.

<sup>25</sup> Francesco's brother Antonino composed a similar occasional cantata, for the birthday of Philip V in 1702: *L'Imeneo del Sole con Clitia sposati per mano della Virtù. Dialogo da cantarsi nella Reale Mamertina Accademia della Clitia eretta sotto gli augustissimi auspici della Sacra Cattolica Maestà del gran Filippo Quinto nel giorno natalizio dell'istesso monarca nel 1702. Posto in musica da Don Antonino Ruffo de' principi della Scaletta academico l'Offuscato. Poesia di Don Giacomo de Moncada principe di Calvaruso Accademico* (Maffei: Messina, 1703), La Corte Cailler, op. cit., 154.

<sup>26</sup> A. Tedesco, 'Applausi festivi: Music and the Image of Power in Spanish Italy', *Music in Art*, 37, 1/2 (2012), 147-149.

<sup>27</sup> Calabrese, op. cit., 94.

<sup>28</sup> Ruffo, op. cit., 27, fn. 4.

friar Francesco. He died in 1718, his estate provides no evidence of his musical activities.<sup>29</sup> His portrait was still preserved in the sacristy of the church of Gesù e Maria delle Trombe at the start of the twentieth century.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, a word about the fourth individual, whose initials ‘D. P. R.’ are embossed on the cover of the Music Book. This may be a further son, another ‘D[on] R[uffo]’, whose first name began with ‘P’. Antonio’s first born Placido is more likely than his younger brother Pietro, who died in 1684 at the age of only fifteen, during the siege of the island of Santa Maura (today Levkada).

#### VIOLS IN THE PALAZZO RUFFO

We know something of the instruments available to the Ruffo sons for their lively musical activities through a variety of documents, which above all list several harpsichords.<sup>31</sup> Of particular interest is an inventory of musical instruments dated 4 March 1715. Despite this document being rendered almost unreadable by flood damage suffered in the aftermath of earthquakes in Messina, the name ‘D. Pietro Ruffo’<sup>32</sup> and the following entries can be made out:

Una Spinetta Fiamenga  
 Due Cembali, uno di Zenti à Sesta, el altro ad Ottava Napolitano  
 ord.<sup>rio</sup>  
 Un Archileuto  
 Un Violino Ordinario  
 Una Lira  
 Quattro Viole d[a] gamba una fatta in A[m]sterdam, una di  
 M[aest]ro Demetri, una di Villamace ad uso [...?] et un Tinoretto,  
 la mag[gi]o<sup>r</sup> parte guastati [?]<sup>33</sup>  
 A Flemish spinet  
 Two harpsichords, one by Zenti à *Sesta* [with a short octave], and  
 an ordinary Neapolitan *ad Ottava* [with a full octave]  
 An archlute  
 An ordinary violin  
 A lira  
 Four viols, one made in Amsterdam, one by Master Demetri, one  
 by Villamace to use as [...], and a small tenor, for the most part  
 broken

This inventory immediately confirms what the presence of chords in the music book already suggested—that the instrument named as ‘Viola’, ‘Basso’, and ‘Violone’ really was a viol. How then, did this viol come to Sicily, where it was without doubt an exotic? Even in the Renaissance, the heyday of the viol in Italy, there was no significant Sicilian viol culture: the few musical or documentary

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<sup>29</sup> Calabrese, op. cit., 88-89.

<sup>30</sup> Ruffo, op. cit., 382.

<sup>31</sup> Costantini & Magaudda, op. cit., 285-289.

<sup>32</sup> The name Pietro was very common in the family. In this case it is unlikely to refer to the short-lived brother of Francesco and Federico, but rather to their nephew, a son of eldest brother Placido.

<sup>33</sup> Costantini & Magaudda, op. cit., 289. I wish to thank Danilo Costantini for generously supplying further information about this document, which helped to decipher certain words—‘Villamace’ not ‘Villamare’; ‘guastati’ not ‘già tastati’.

references to its presence on the island all relate to immigrant musicians.<sup>34</sup> During the course of the seventeenth century the viol steadily all but vanished from daily musical life in Italy—the more so in Sicily, where it was only ever sparsely recorded.

Let us consider the case of the viol from Amsterdam. It should not come as a great surprise to encounter two Flemish instruments—a spinet and a viol—so far south in Europe. The city of Messina in general, and Antonio Ruffo in particular, had close trading contacts in the Netherlands; Ruffo adorned his collection with valuable paintings and works of art by Dutch masters, and had business partners in Amsterdam.<sup>35</sup> Anyone who imported tapestries and porcelain plates from the North to Messina, would certainly not have hesitated to transport musical instruments. Ruffo's sons thus had every opportunity to become familiar with the high culture of the viol in the Netherlands. In the 1680s, in Amsterdam and The Hague, Carolus Hacquart and especially Johan Schenk published works which opened up new possibilities for the instrument, and which may be counted amongst the greatest and most challenging viol repertoire. The vigorous international trade pursued by Dutch towns offered viol players the chance to exchange ideas with colleagues in England, France and Germany. An echo of the lively activity of this fertile melting pot may have reached Messina, and inspired the Ruffo brothers to develop an interest in an instrument they can hardly have heard of in their hometown.

It is not possible to give much more precise information about the four viols on this list. The viol from Amsterdam need not have been the work of a Dutch instrument maker, it could simply have been acquired there. The Villamace or Villamaci family of Messina produced many sculptors and painters in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—Luca Villamaci, who lived in Messina during the second half of the seventeenth century and was particularly known for stucco sculptures, was a pupil of Agostino Scilla, who had connections with Antonio Ruffo.<sup>36</sup> It is entirely possible that a member of this family of artists tried his hand at instrument making. I have found no trace of an instrument maker with the name Master Demetri (or Dimitri).

That the four viols were by 1715 'for the most part broken', and thus no longer in use, fits well with the biographical details gathered together above, and the

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<sup>34</sup> Attilio Opezinghi, a merchant from Pisa who died in Palermo in 1533, possessed an instrument collection which included 'violuni di arco'. The Spaniard Sebastian Raval published a volume with *Ricerari* for 'Viole d'arco' in Sicily (De'Franceschi: Palermo, 1596). Decades later the Bolognese composer Bartolomeo Montalbano published a volume of *Sinfonie* (Maringo: Palermo, 1629), some of which are intended for four 'Viole'—whether this term includes viols is, however, debatable. The instrument-making Siciliano or Cicali family had been active for generations in Venice.

<sup>35</sup> Ruffo, op. cit., 167 passim; Calabrese, op. cit., 124-127; R. De Gennaro, 'Da Rubens a Jordaens d'Anversa, presenze fiamminghe nella collezione messinese di Antonio Ruffo principe della Scaletta', *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, 76 (2006/2008), 37-61; N. Gozzano, 'Mercanti fiamminghi in Italia nel Seicento: agenti, artisti, consoli', *Bollettino Telematico dell'Arte*, 595 (2011), <<http://www.bta.it/txt/a0/05/bta00595.html>> (accessed January 2019).

<sup>36</sup> M. Cesareo, 'Luca Villamaci. Un artista messinese alla corte di Luigi XIV: proposte di ricerca', *Società, potere e libertà* (Aracne: Rome, 2016), 101-132; V. Abbate, *Pittori del Seicento a Palazzo Abatellis* (Electa: Milan, 1990), 144.

date of the *Notbók*: for the Ruffo sons music seems to have been a youthful pursuit, in later documents it features only marginally.

#### THE TUNING OF FRANCESCO RUFFO'S VIOL

As if the simple presence of a viol in Messina were not astonishing enough, the tuning used in the Ruffo household was also extraordinary, as we shall now see. Thanks to their idiomatic use of the instrument the works in the Music Book supply ample information on this question. There follow brief details of the relevant features of each piece—range and use of double stops and chords:

- [I] *Sinfonia del Sig: D: Fiderico Ruffo à Viola Sola*, in a  
Range: G-e'  
No chords or double stops.
- [II] *Sinfonia del Sig: D: Francesco Ruffo | Viola Sola*, in F  
Range: C-f'  
No chords or double stops.
- [III] *Sinfonia del Sig: D: Francesco Ruffo*, in D  
Range: D-e'  
A single passage with chords and double stops in the *Balletto*.
- [IV] *Sonata Del Sig: D: Francesco Ruffo*, in c/C  
Range: F- $\phi$ '  
One G major chord.
- [V] *Sinfonia à Viola Sola Del Sig: Fra D: Francesco Ruffo*, in G  
Range: C- $\sharp$ '  
Frequent chords and double stops, including one section, marked *Arpeggio*, consisting entirely of chords, and two movements in double stops throughout.
- [VI] *Sonata à Viola Sola Del Sig: Fra D: Francesco Ruffo*, in e  
Range: D-e'  
One chord.
- [VII] *Sonata Del Sig: D: Francesco Ruffo*, in G  
Range: D-a'  
Double stops and chords especially in the movement marked *Tremolo Adagio*, which contains nothing else.
- [VIII] *Sonata a Viola Sola | Filippo Muscari*, in a  
Range: D-g'  
No chords or double stops.
- [IX] *Sonata A Basso Solo Del Sig Fra D: Francesco Ruffo*, in a  
Range: C-f'  
The *Largo* movement consists entirely of chords and double stops.
- [X] *li 19 giugno 1682 | Del Ill.mo Sig. F. D. Francesco Ruffo | La Pietra è Paula*, in F  
Range: F-f'  
The *Tremolo* movement consists entirely of chords and double stops.
- [XI] *Sinf.<sup>a</sup> A Violone Solo FDFR: [?] A P.<sup>o</sup> April.<sup>e</sup> 1690*, in E $\flat$

Range:  $D-bb'$ , although  $bb'$  is notated only once (in the *Fuga presto*), and due to corrections at this point, and in the following sequence, the  $bb'$  is in fact avoided; the highest note is therefore an isolated  $db'$  (Fig. 2).

The *Largo Arpeggio stretto dà biscrome* movement consists entirely of chords.



Fig. 2. Francesco Ruffo, *Sinfonia A Violone Solo* in  $Eb$  [XI], start of the *Fuga presto* in the solo part. Note the corrections avoiding the highest notes in bb. 2-5.

Federico Ruffo and Filippo Muscari, who played organ and harpsichord but not the viola, understandably avoid a fully idiomatic use of the instrument. Their works thus provide little clear information about the tuning, as they operate within a limited range and have no passages in more than one part. Indeed, the first of the viol player Francesco Ruffo's works make sparing use of chords: only with the *Sinfonia à Viola Sola* in  $G$  [V] did he appear to take courage and dare to write movements entirely consisting of sequences of arpeggiated chords or double stops, exploiting the full polyphonic sound of the viol. The nature of the closely spaced chords is instantly recognisable to experienced viol players as being suited to the familiar tuning in fourths and a third, but trying out the works in the standard  $D$  tuning reveals unsettling discrepancies. Many chords are unplayable, the part often descends to low  $C$ , and makes use of a unison double stop  $B-B$ , as well as the octave  $B-b$  (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3: Francesco Ruffo, *Sinfonia à Viola Sola* in  $G$  [V], *Grave*, solo part bb. 13-19. Note the octave  $B-b$  in b. 14, double stop  $B-B$  in b. 16, and the chord  $E-B-B-e$  in b. 17

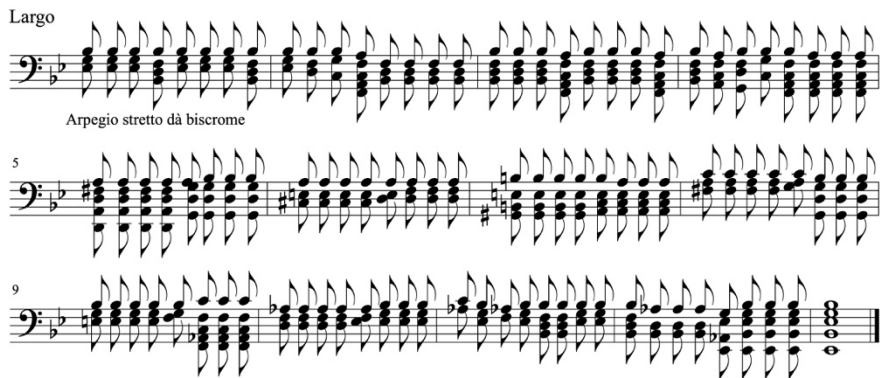
Moreover, none of the chords or arpeggios require a note higher than  $d'$ , which probably means that the instrument had no  $d'$  string. This suspicion is confirmed by several  $D$  major chords which have  $a$  as the highest note—an open  $d'$  string could have been used here without difficulty to round off the chord.<sup>37</sup> However unexpected it may be, this evidence all points to a bass viol tuned in  $A$ . In practice, the chords and double stops of this sonata lie comfortably within reach on a viol whose top five strings are tuned to  $D-G-B-e-a$ , with just one exception, which I shall deal with shortly. The *Largo* of the *Sonata à Basso Solo* in  $a$  [X], for example, clearly exploits the open  $a$ ,  $e$  and  $B$  strings (Ex. 1):

<sup>37</sup> The chord  $D-A-d-f\sharp-a$  occurs in, for example, the first movement of the *Sinfonia* in  $G$  [V], bb. 46 & 49.



Ex. 1: Francesco Ruffo, *Sonata à Basso Solo* in a [IX], *Largo*, solo part.

How, then, was the lowest string of the Ruffo viol tuned? The conventional intervals call for an *AA* string here, but the Viola part, although frequently dropping to *C*, never goes lower than that. The absence of the note *AA* is especially striking in the pieces in a, and even more so in those in D, in which it has an obvious role to play in every dominant-tonic cadence. Thus a lowest string tuned to *C* is adequate for these sonatas, and in several places thoroughly comfortable—in b. 11 of the *Largo* (Ex. 1), for example, it avoids a position shift for the low *E*. It might be contended that it could have been a five stringed viol, with a *C* rather than a *D* string. However, there are some chords of F, major and minor, found repeatedly in the *Largo* of the last sonata which argue against this (see Ex. 2). It is therefore very likely that the lowest two strings were tuned just a whole tone apart. Granted, this is not an especially economical arrangement, but it is nevertheless not without parallels.<sup>38</sup>



Ex. 2: Francesco Ruffo, *Sinfonia à Violone Solo* in Eb [XI], *Largo*, solo part.

There is just one passage in these eleven sonatas, the exception mentioned above, in which there are three arpeggios which cannot be held down as chords

<sup>38</sup> Bartolomeo Bismantova gives the tuning *G-A-d-g*, to be understood an octave lower, for the 'Contrabasso, ò Violone', *Compendio Musicale* (Ferrara 1677, Addenda from 1694), [118]; Thomas Baltazar Janovska describes the same tuning both at the notated pitch for the 'Violone', and at the octave for the 'Violone Grosso Seu Magnum', *Clavis Ad Thesaurum Magnae Artis Musicae* (Labaun: Prague, 1701), 322-323.



in this tuning—they are in the *Largo* of the last *Sinfonia* in E $\flat$  [XI], on the fifth quavers of bb. 8-10 respectively (see Ex. 2). This movement bears the rubric ‘Arpeggio stretto dà biscrome’ (‘narrow arpeggio in demisemiquavers’), the arpeggios should be played fast and rhythmically well-defined. I would suggest that these critical chords should be played on two strings, rather than spread across three—this is, of course, an unhelpful obstacle to a smooth performance, but it will hardly be noticeable to the listener. Furthermore, the preceding arpeggios in each of these three bars can also be played with two notes on one string, which prepares the left hand for the dissonances on the fifth quaver.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, the key of E $\flat$  remains a remarkable choice for a viol in this special tuning, since three open strings, *a*, *e*, and *B*, are unavailable. Transposed for the normal D tuning this represents the key of A $\flat$ , a challenge which even the most virtuosic French and German player-composers were at pains to avoid.<sup>40</sup> And yet the chords in this *sinfonia* are playable only in this tuning, all attempts to transpose it ended in failure.

To summarize: the viol tuning in the Ruffo household was *C-D-G-B-e-a*. This is an altogether extraordinary phenomenon. Great bass viols in *AA* are described by Aurelio Virgiliano and Michael Praetorius,<sup>41</sup> but it is unthinkable that a direct line might be drawn from them to this Sicilian viol, all the more so, since the low viol consort was never established in the Kingdom of Naples.<sup>42</sup> An affection for the instrument entirely independently arrived at, not influenced by specific role models, seems to me to be a hypothesis which is a better fit with the geographical and chronological contexts: it is further confirmation of the isolation from the instrumental mainstream in which the Ruffo family cultivated the viol.

Since the bass end of its range is limited to C, the Ruffo instrument can hardly be seen as a form of double bass—this note can be reached on a bass viol of normal size and sounding string length, even with plain gut strings.

Lastly, for the record, the three instrument names ‘Viola’, ‘Basso’, and ‘Violone’ adopted in the *Notbok* are clearly synonyms,<sup>43</sup> this is the same relaxed approach to terminology seen in the alternative titles *Sonata* and *Sinfonia* for works undifferentiated in structure and form. In any case, no differences of tuning, range or playing technique can be determined from an examination of the idiom and characteristics of the works; the three terms refer to one and the same instrument. Note in particular, that the range of the part labelled ‘Violone’ lies no lower than those marked ‘Viola’ or ‘Basso’. The Music Book does not reflect

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<sup>39</sup> I wish to thank Raffaele Tiseo for guiding my thinking towards this conclusion, in this case, as in many others.

<sup>40</sup> There is a single movement in A $\flat$  major in a much later sonata in C minor by Carl Friedrich Abel (PL-Pu 7836, *Maltzan Sammlung*, 9-16, New Abel Catalogue A2:55A). My thanks to Richard Boothby for drawing this to my attention.

<sup>41</sup> A. Virgiliano, *Il Dolcimelo* [...] (ms, c.1600); M. Praetorius, *Syntagma musicum* [...] (Elias Holwein: Wolfenbüttel, 1619).

<sup>42</sup> B. Hoffmann, ‘Dal concerto alto al concerto basso: accordature delle viole da gamba nell’Italia del Cinquecento’, *Recercare*, 16 (2004), 23-67.

<sup>43</sup> For the terminology of the viol in Italy see B. Hoffmann, ‘The Nomenclature of the Viol in Italy’, *Journal of the Viola da Gamba Society*, 2 (2008), 1-16. I would like to take this opportunity to add a further exception to fn. 39 of that article: the simple term ‘Viola’ is also used tacitly in the Ruffo Music Book to refer to the viol. As with the Bonavides, the family context here renders further explanation unnecessary.

the two different sizes of instrument seen in the inventory of 1715, where a tenor is listed alongside the normal viols.

#### THE WORKS: STYLE AND TECHNIQUE

As described above, the sonatas and sinfonias by Muscari and the two Ruffos consist of loose, freely composed sequences of movements of quite variable length, sometimes following on without break, sometimes clearly separated. In this respect they are typical of their time, as the form of the late Baroque sonata, with its distinct, self-contained movements, began to emerge. In addition, Francesco Ruffo included dance movements in the mix, the first two of his sinfonias reflect the Sonata-Suite form commonly found in Northern Europe. The opening of his *Sinfonia* in F [II] is modelled on the French Overture form: a slow introduction entirely in dotted rhythms gives way to a fast *Fuga*, the movement ends with a return to the opening *Grave*. In the sonata by Muscari a *Presto* in triple time with variations over a descending bass line with a closing cadence is clearly identifiable as a chaconne. Some sections and movements have the character of a capriccio, with freely structured chains of quick notes in the solo part over a slow moving bass.<sup>44</sup> The term *Canzona*—by this time no longer in use in Italy, but still found north of the Alps—is used for movements with an imitative structure, in which an opening motive is answered in quick succession by the bass, or by the viol itself. This rudimentary thematic development is underlined by the reappearance of the motive during the movement. On the other hand, *Fuga* does not indicate an imitative structure: these consist of unbroken fast semiquavers, accompanied by steady, non-thematic crotchets in the bass. This unusual type of fugue, in which the soloist restlessly ‘flees’ (but is not chased), is also found elsewhere.<sup>45</sup>

The works of these three Messina composers are not lacking in attractive melodic ideas, but the harmonic progressions reveal the absence of a thorough grounding in the craft of composing, there is some amateurish workmanship. Octave parallels and doubled thirds in the *Sonata* by Filippo Muscari suggest that the anonymous versifier in the *Paschino* cited above may not have been so wide of the mark.

Technical aspects come to the fore especially in the pieces by the viol-playing Francesco Ruffo. He often calls for specific bowing techniques, for example, where a whole movement is marked *Tremolo*. In *La Pietra è Paula* [X] the instruction is easy to interpret, the movement consists of repeated quaver double stops, which are readily performed using the standard contemporary bow vibrato. On the other hand, it is not clear what the instruction means in the *Sonata* in G [VII], as this movement proceeds in crotchets without repeated pitches, and consists not only of double stops but also three-part chords, which cannot be reconciled with the gentle technique of bow vibrato. Francesco must have intended some other ‘Tremolo’ effect here, perhaps, for example, an alternation of the individual notes of the double and triple stops. The arpeggios

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<sup>44</sup> *Sinfonia* [III], fifth movement, *Grave*; *Sinfonia* [V], third movement, without tempo indication, and last movement, without tempo indication.

<sup>45</sup> I am aware of an example in the Este music archives, a *Fuga Presto* in an anonymous *Sonata per viola*, which is accompanied throughout by a pedal: A-Wn, E. M. 70r, f. 1v. This page is reproduced in B. Hoffmann, ‘Il violoncello inglese’, *Studi vivaldiani*, 4 (2004), 43-52, here 47.

in the last *Sinfonia* in E $\flat$  [XI], to be played in fast demisemiquavers, have already been discussed—this is by no means the only movement to consist entirely of chords and double stops, and in the course of the harmonic progressions some unusual and uncomfortable chord shapes cannot be avoided. They demand a technical ability much on a level with the works of Johan Schenk. Considering that the top string of the Ruffo viol was tuned to *a*, the upper range of the viol part is not inconsiderable, often reaching *g'*, and occasionally *ab'* and *a'*, an octave above the open string. A single notated *bb'* is, however, avoided by a later correction (see above, and Fig. 2). The *Tremolo Adagio* movement of the *Sonata* in G [VII], also discussed above, calls for double stops in high positions.<sup>46</sup> Francesco Ruffo, then, possessed a superior technique, absolutely on a level with English, Dutch, French, and German virtuosos of the time.

The discovery of the Ruffo Music Book and the compositions of Federico and Francesco Ruffo and Filippo Muscari has enriched the viol repertoire with some interesting and technically thought-provoking music—works which, whilst undoubtedly not of the highest quality, are attractive and original. At the same time the manuscript is a reminder that those researching the history of the viol are never safe from surprises. Nobody was expecting to find that a bass viol in A was in use in a high Baroque palace in Sicily.

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<sup>46</sup> In bb. 1 and 6.

## “The Notes the Double Bass Should Play”: Corrette, continuo, and the problem of double bass reduction

HEATHER MILLER LARDIN

Recreating late seventeenth and eighteenth-century basso continuo practices affords today's performer a great deal of creative satisfaction. The art of continuo playing, or improvising a harmonic accompaniment from a bass line, originated in Italy towards the beginning of the seventeenth century as a practical way to support polychoral and contrapuntal sacred music. It eventually served the emerging monodic style of vocal music as it replaced complex polyphony and melody/bass polarization grew to dominate eighteenth century compositional style.

Continuo instrumentation was flexible and based on local practice. While composers sometimes made specific suggestions or designations, the continuo group played from the same bass line for the most part. Keyboard and plucked instruments realized chords above the bass line. Sustaining instruments participated *ad libitum* and could include bass viol, bass violin, cello, double bass and bassoon.<sup>1</sup> The palette of textures and tone colors possible was limited only by the number of players and instruments available. Within the context of accompaniment, keyboard players had a great deal of license. They could choose where to add chords, where to leave them out, how to voice them, and whether to arpeggiate or play directly; they might also add passagework and alter the bass line or double it at the octave.

It is from this improvisatory tradition that the keyboard player, composer, and educator Michel Corrette drew his understanding of orchestral double bass playing.<sup>2</sup> Born in 1707, Corrette saw the peak and decline of the figured bass

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<sup>1</sup> Bowed basses sometimes realized figures as well. See David Watkin, "Corelli's Op.5 Sonatas: 'Violino e violone o cimbalò?'," *Early Music* 24, no. 4 (1996). Watkin cites Corrette as evidence of the practice in eighteenth-century France, p. 658. See also Duport, Jean-Louis, *Essai sur le doigté du violoncelle et sur la conduite de l'archet* (Paris: Imbault, 1806); Spitzer and Zaslav, *Birth of the Orchestra*, 339; Fiona M. Palmer, *Domenico Dragonetti in England (1794-1846): The Career of a Double Bass Virtuoso* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 114-19.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term "double bass" throughout this article to refer to a large bowed instrument that realizes its part an octave below notated pitch. For our purposes it will not be necessary to categorize types or tunings of double basses, since the instrument's function remains the same

tradition. By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, composers had all but abandoned it in favour of writing specific parts for each instrument. Eventually keyboard continuo was dropped from instrumental ensembles. Corrette's perspective at this pivotal time is valuable, looking both backward and forward. His pedagogical treatises comprise at least seventeen volumes for more than twenty-four instruments written over the course of nearly half a century (approximately 1737 to 1784). Individually, Corrette's methods vary greatly in length, focus, and content. Taken together, they offer an expansive (if one-sided) view of the musical milieu of eighteenth-century Paris.

Corrette's *Méthodes pour apprendre à jouer de la Contre-Basse à 3. à 4. et à 5. cordes, de la Quinte ou Alto et de la Viole d'Orphée* (Paris, 1773) is the earliest dedicated method for both double bass and viola, and the only known pedagogical information and solo repertoire for the *viole d'Orphée* - the author's renovation of the nearly extinct bass viol.<sup>3</sup> In the double bass portion of the treatise, Corrette offers some

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in any case. Seventeenth century composers tended to specify a 16' bowed bass with modifiers like "contrabbasso", "doppio", or "grosso". Monteverdi called for a such an instrument in *Orfeo* (1607), the Marian Vespers (1610), and the *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (1624). Praetorius describes a "Gar groß baß-viol" tuned E-A-D-G in his *Syntagma Musicum* (1619). Many further examples appear throughout the century. By about 1700, the double bass had established its foothold in the continuo group of Italian opera orchestras (and the German ensembles who imitated them) and was about to surface in Paris. See VanScheeuwijck, Mark. "Violoncello and Violone", *A Performer's Guide to Seventeenth-Century Music*, 2nd ed. Ed. Stewart Carter and Jeffrey Kite-Powell, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Early references to the double bass in theoretical or pedagogical works can be problematic to interpret, since nomenclature for bowed bass instruments was often ambiguous. Nonetheless, some writers clearly discuss the largest basses (played at either the 8' or 16' octaves): Adriano Banchieri, *Conclusioni nel suono dell'organo* (Bologna: 1609), 53-4, Bartolomeo Bismantova, *Compendio musicale* (Ferrara: 1677), 118, Johann Philipp Eisel, *Musicus autodidaktos* (Erfurt: J. M. Funcken, 1738), 47-51, Majer, *Music-Saal*, 100, Leopold Mozart, *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule* (Augsburg: 1756), 3, Michael Praetorius, *Syntagma Musicum*, vol. 3 (Wolfenbüttel: 1619), 148, Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* (Berlin: 1752), Speer, *Grundrichtiger Unterricht*, "Bass-Violon".

Earlier writers generally mention the viola as a postscript to more detailed discussions of the violin. See for example Jean-Laurent de Béthizy, *Exposition de la théorie et de la pratique de la musique, suivant les nouvelles découvertes*, 2 ed. (Paris: F. G. Deschamps, 1764), 12, Philbert Jambe de Fer, *Epitome musical des tons, sons et accordz, es voix humaines, fleustes d'Alleman, fleustes à neuf trous, violes, & violons* (Lyon: 1556), 63, Joseph Friedrich Bernhard Caspar Majer, *Neu-eröffneter theoretisch- und practischer Music-Saal* (Nürnberg: Johann Jacob Cremer, 1741), Plate 33, Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie universelle* (Paris: Sebastien Cramoisy, 1636), 184-5, Daniel Speer, *Grundrichtiger...Unterricht der musicalischen Kunst, oder Vierfaches musicalisches Kleblatt* (Ulm: 1697), 198-9. For a contemporary discussion of pedagogical works for viola, see Maurice W. Riley, *The*

technical information about the double bass and lists three possible tunings. He then devotes significant space to a discussion of “the notes the double bass should play.” Corrette assumes the double bassist will reduce the bass line at sight to the “principal notes” of the harmony, a practice that he ties directly to basso continuo realization.<sup>45</sup>

### *The “principal notes”*

In *Le maître de clavecin* (1753), Corrette tells us that accompaniment is “the art of playing several parts with the right hand over the principal notes of the bass, which are played with the left hand.”<sup>46</sup> In other words, one plays chords over only the most important notes of the bass line. Michel de Saint Lambert explains

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*History of the Viola* (Ann Arbor, MI: Braun-Brumfield, 1991)., Chapter IX: “Instruction for the viola”.

<sup>4</sup> Brun, *A New History of the Double Bass*, 75.

<sup>5</sup> The bulk of this article is drawn from my dissertation on Corrette’s treatise on double bass, viola, and *viola d’Orphée* at Cornell University, which I completed in 2005. Family life and my performing career delayed preparations for its publication, allowing me time and opportunity to develop further clarity through practical application. Over the years I have tried to keep an open mind: not everyone agreed with Corrette about bass-line reduction in the eighteenth century, nor do they today – and for good reasons. Whatever their stance on the subject, I believe double bassists and other continuo players will benefit from considering bass line reduction in its historical and practical context.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professors Neal Zaslaw, Rebecca Harris-Warrick, and the late John Hsu for their assistance with this work. Lardin, Heather Miller, “Michel Corrette’s *Méthodes pour apprendre à jouer de la contre-basse à 3, à 4, et à 5 cordes, de la quinte ou alto et de la viola d’Orphée*: a new translation with commentary”, DMA dissertation, Cornell University, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> “L’Accompagnement est l’Art de toucher plusieurs parties de la Main droite sur les principales notes de la Basse que l’on touche de la main gauche.” Corrette, *Le maître de clavecin*, 1. Corrette expands his definition in his second accompaniment method, *Prototypes*:

*Demande. A quoi sert l’Accompagnement du Clavecin ou de l’orgue ?*

*Réponse. A guider, et soutenir la voix, a remplir, et a lier l’harmonie dans une sonate, une Concerto, et autre Musique.*

*D. Qu’entendés-vous par les Verbes remplir, et lier l’harmonie ?*

*R.. Par remplir j’entends que l’accompagnateur fait entendre tous les accords complets sur les principales notes de la Basse, et lier l’harmonie signifie la liason, et la progression que les accords doivent avoir entre eux cela signifie encore que l’accompagnement sert a supplier à la sècheresse et à la maigreur qui regne dans une Musique en Dou, ou les parties qui doivent etre naturellement dans une harmonie complete sont obmises ; desorte qu’un accompagnement bien dirigé fait entendre une excellente partition de trois ou quatre parties contre la Basse, et plusieurs parties frappées ensemble se nomment accord ; pour ce Voyés les quatre premiers Chapitres du Maitre de Clavecin. Michel Corrette, *Prototypes contenant des leçons d’accompagnement par demandes et réponses, pour servir d’addition au livre intitulé Le maître de clavecin, avec des sonates, vn, fl, descant viol, où les accords sont notés sur la basse* (Paris: 1754), 1.*

how to determine the principal notes in his *Nouveau traité de l'accompagnement du clavecin* (1707). Primarily, they are the strong beats of each measure plus most bass notes with figures or which move by leap. Stepwise notes in the bass are usually passing tones and do not require right-hand chords until the harmony changes.

1. When the Bass notes move by consecutive degrees, one is not obligated to accompany them all. One may accompany just the first of each pair of [bass] notes [i.e., with one chord for each pair]. This is even more graceful when the [bass] notes are of short duration (that is, Quarters or Eighths); & when they are Eighths one may even accompany just the first of four [bass] notes [i.e., with one chord for every group of four] – particularly in the two-beat measure [i.e., in duple meter].



#### Accompanying the Principal Notes – Duple Meter (Saint Lambert)

This [rule holds true only if] the unaccompanied [bass] notes are unfigured, as in the preceding example; for when a [bass] note is figured one must always accompany it, however short it may be – unless one clearly sees that the figure is unnecessary, & that the [bass] note can be passed over without accompaniment.

You will notice furthermore that one may pass over (without specifically accompanying) just the [bass] notes that happen to occur between two beats in the measure, & not those that fall directly on the beats; for these latter ones [i.e., bass notes that fall on the beats] always need to be accompanied – except in the three-beat measure [i.e., in triple meter], as we will discuss later.

2. When the [bass] notes progress by disjunct degrees [i.e., by leaps], one must accompany all of them (however short they may be) – except when a single chord can serve for several [bass] notes, as we have shown before in several places.
3. When the measure is in three beats [i.e., triple meter] & the Air is played quickly, one can be content with accompanying just the first [bass] note

of each measure – provided that the [bass] notes move by consecutive degrees, & that the unaccompanied bass notes are unfigured (which happens very often in lively *Airs*).



Accompanying the Principal Notes – Triple Meter  
(Saint Lambert)

4. The principal beat of a measure (in all types of measure [i.e., meter]) is the first beat; that one predominates over all the others.

In the two-beat measure (of any type), the first & second [beats] are nearly equal principal [beats].

In the three-beat measure (either slow or fast), the first and last [beats] are [principal beats].

And in the four-beat measure, the first & third [beats are principal beats.]<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> 1. *Quand les notes de Basse vont par degrez successifs, on n'est pas obligé de les accompagner toutes. On peut n'accompagner que de deux notes l'une alternativement. Cela à même meilleure grace quand les notes sont breves, c'est-à-dire Noires ou Croches; & l'on peut même quand elles sont Croches n'accompagner que de quatre notes l'une; sur tout dans la mesure à deux temps.*

*Ceci se doit entendre supposé que les notes qu'on passe sans accompagnement ne soient pas chiffrées, comme dans l'exemple précédent; car quand une notes est chiffrée il la faut toujours accompagner, quelque breve qu'elle soit; à moins qu'on ne voye clairement que le chiffre n'est pas nécessaire, & que la note se peut passer d'accompagnement.*

*Vous remarquez encore qu'on ne passe sans accompagnement particulier que les notes qui se trouvent entre deux temps dans la mesure, & non pas celles qui tombent précisément sur les temps; car ces dernières veulent toujours être accompagnées, si ce n'est dans la mesure à trois temps, comme nous le dirons plus bas.*

2. *Quand les notes marchent par degrez interrompus, il faut aussi les accompagner toutes, quelques breves qu'elles soient, excepté lorsqu'un même accord peut servir à plusieurs notes, comme nous l'avons fait cy-devant en plusieurs endroits.*

3. *Quand la mesure est à trois temps, & que l'air se joie vite, on peut se contenter d'accompagner seulement la premier note de chaque mesure; pourvu que les notes marchent par degrez successifs, & que celles qu'on se dispense d'accompagner ne soient pas chiffrées, ce qui arrive très-souvent dans les *Airs* guais.*

...4. *Les principaux temps d'une mesure, sont dans toute espece de mesure, le premier temps: celui-là l'emporte*



Corrette gives a similar explanation in his *Prototypes contenant des leçons d'accompagnement* (1754).<sup>8</sup> His example shows an active figured bass line (B) reduced to the principal notes (A) and chords above them (top line). In general, he adds chords to the first beat of each sixteenth-note grouping and all figured notes.



Accompanying the Principal Notes (Corrette, *Prototypes*)

- Q[uestion]: Must one play chords on all of the notes?  
A[nswer]: No, one ordinarily plays a chord on each beat ([Example] A), and sometimes the same [chord] serves for several [beats] ([Example] B). One [can] also play two chords for a beat, but more rarely ([Example] D).  
Q. On what occasion does one play two chords on the same note?  
A. When a dissonance is resolved on the same pitch ([Example] C), or when the note changes degree ([Example] E).<sup>9</sup>

Corrette's description of how double bassists should reduce a bass part to the principal notes lines up well with his own and Saint Lambert's instructions to

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*sur toutes les autres.*

*Dans la mesure à deux temps de quelque espece qu'elle soit, le premier & le second sont presque également principaux.*

*Dans la mesure à trois [sic] temps (soit lents, soit vîtes) c'est le premier & le dernier qui se sont.*

*Et dans la mesure à quatre temps, c'est le premier & le troisième.*

Monsieur de Saint-Lambert, *Nouveau traité de l'accompagnement du clavecin, de l'orgue, et des autres instruments* (Paris: C. Ballard, 1707), 57-58. Translated in Michel de Saint-Lambert and John S. Powell, *A New Treatise on Accompaniment, Publications of the Early Music Institute* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 100-02.

<sup>8</sup> Corrette, *Prototypes*, 16.

<sup>9</sup> "D[emande]. Faut-il faire des accords sur toutes les notes? R[éponse]. Non on fait ordinairement un accord sur chaque tems, A, et quelque fois le même sert pour plusieurs, B. On fait aussi deux accords pour un tems, mais plus rarement D. D Dans quelle occasion fait on deux accords sur la même note? R. Quand les Dissonances se sauvent sur la même note, C, ou lorsque la moitié de la note change de degré, E."

the keyboardist. The double bassist plays all bass notes with figures, plus all unfigured tonic and dominant notes (i.e. root position chords). In practice, typical progressions were left unfigured; and double bass parts might not contain figures at all if not shared with a keyboard player. Thus, Corrette advises the novice to study harmony and composition, and to practice with “well-figured” bass lines such as those of Pergolesi, Corelli, Vivaldi and Geminiani.<sup>10</sup>

*Contextualizing ex tempore bass line reduction: accompaniment manuals*

We can further explore the mindset of the double bassist during the transition from *basso continuo* to independent bass lines through the same keyboard continuo accompaniment manuals that talk about the principal notes, including Saint Lambert’s, Corrette’s, and many others.<sup>11</sup> Dozens of these treatises were published in Europe in the late seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth century. Many presented just the basic principles of harmony and figured bass. Others discuss interpretive issues such as voice-leading and doublings. The most elaborate treatises appeared later, as continuo accompaniment reached its peak. These address various performance options that could be implemented to maximize expression, including both the addition and reduction of passage-work in the bass line.

A number of writers mention situations in which the player might choose to double the bass line at the octave.<sup>12</sup> Doing so enabled keyboard players to amplify their volume and add emphasis at key points. As orchestras expanded in the eighteenth century, this device became increasingly important.<sup>13</sup>

*Quantz, Versuch.* On a harpsichord with one keyboard, passages marked Piano may be produced by a moderate touch and by diminishing the number of parts, those marked Mezzo Forte by doubling the bass in octaves, those marked Forte in the same manner and also by taking some

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<sup>10</sup> Corrette, *Contre-basse/alto/viole d'Orphée*, 5. Several prominent eighteenth-century double bassists were in fact composers; the importance of this will emerge later. N.B.: Corrette ran a publishing business in his house, printing and selling works by all of these composers!

<sup>11</sup> Corrette’s accompaniment treatises were particularly successful. Jaffrès, *Corrette and the organ*, 14.

<sup>12</sup> See F. T. Arnold, *The Art of Accompaniment from a Thorough-Bass* (London: The Holland Press, 1931), 381-82.

<sup>13</sup> Volume could also be increased by doubling the bass at the *upper* octave, within the chordal texture. See for example Quantz, *Versuch*, 251. Muffat’s *Regulae concertuum partiturae* (MS, 1699) discusses what is known as “full-voiced accompaniment” at great length without mentioning lower-octave doubling of the bass line. For further discussion, see George Buelow, “The Full-Voiced Style of Thoroughbass Realization,” *Acta Musicologica* 35, no. 4 (1963).

*consonances* belonging to the chord into the left hand, and those marked Fortissimo by quick arpeggiations of the chords from below upwards, by the same doubling of the octaves and the consonances in the left hand, and by a more vehement and forceful touch.<sup>14</sup>

*Pasquali, Thorough-Bass Made Easy*: I have not mentioned the use of octaves with the left hand before this time, on purpose that the student might acquire a good habit of fingering the bass-notes singly before he attempted them, being very dangerous to be meddled with too soon: But now he may begin to use them, though sparingly, and very rarely with any note shorter than a crotchet: And as the use of such octaves is only designed to give an additional force to some particular notes, they should seldom be introduced but in full pieces, when all the instruments play aloud; but omitted in such parts as are played soft.

And, in order to make those soft parts still more tender and soothing, it will be proper to leave out the octaves in the chords above...so that when the loud parts return, by giving the octaves below and the full chords above, it may appear as if the harpsichord had the faculty of increasing and decreasing in sound, like violoncellos, bassoons, &c.<sup>15</sup>

Octave doublings could also help to anchor an unsteady ensemble. According to Jacques Boyvin,

...the left hand simply plays only the bass, or else it plays octaves when the right hand holds a triad, and this octave helps to re-orient [other] accompanying parts that are lost.<sup>16</sup>

Half a century later, Quantz's account of the orchestral double bass sounds similar:

In a large ensemble, and especially in an orchestra, where one person cannot always see the others or hear them well, the double bass player,

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<sup>14</sup> Translated in Quantz and Reilly, *On Playing the Flute*, 256. *Auf einem Clavicymbal mit einem Claviere, kann das Piano durch einen gemäßigten Anschlag, und durch die Verminderung der Stimmen; das Mezzo forte durch Verdoppelung der Octaven im Basse; das Forte durch eben dieses, und wenn man noch in der linken Hand einige zum Accorde gehörige Consonanzen mitnimmt; das Fortissimo aber, durch geschwinde Brechungen der Accorde von unten herauf, durch eben diese Verdoppelung der Octaven, und der Consonanzen, in der linken Hand, und durch einen heftigern und stärken Anschlag, hervor gebracht werden.* Quantz, *Versuch*, 230. § 17.

<sup>15</sup> Nicolo Pasquali, *Thorough-bass Made Easy* (Edinburgh: 1757), 43. (Note Pasquali's reference to selective octave doubling.)

<sup>16</sup> "...la main gauche ne joie simplement que la Basse, sinon qu'elle fait l'octave quand la main droite tient un Accord parfait, & cette Octave aide à connoître les Accompagnements éloignez..." Jacques Boyvin, *Second livre d'orgue contenant les huit tons à l'usage de l'église* (Paris: C. Ballard, 1700), 12.

together with the violoncellist, forms the point of equilibrium, so to speak, in maintaining the correct tempo.<sup>17</sup>

Rameau even drew a direct parallel between keyboard and double bass:

Two consecutive octaves between the lowest note of the chords and the bass produce the same effect as a doubled bass [i.e. violoncello], according to the practice of doubling it with the double bass.<sup>18</sup>

We can extract from the various sources four realization devices that may incorporate an exact or modified octave doubling where it is not expressly indicated by the composer: 1) playing *unisono* or *tasto solo* passages with no right-hand chords; 2) playing right-hand chords on the principal notes; 3) imposing improvised figuration onto a slower-moving bass line with right-hand chords on the principal notes; 4) simplifying a rapid bass line to its principal notes, with right-hand chords. I offer below a survey of these references and include as supporting material the passages and examples that most clearly state the concepts presented. French sources prior to 1773 have been given preference when available. For many cases, parallel passages and examples can be found in other accompaniment manuals.

#### *The unison*

The Italian term *all'unisono* (unison) denotes passages in which all parts play the same melodic material; chordal instruments play the bass line and refrain from filling out the harmonies.<sup>19</sup> The direction *tasto solo* indicates that the keyboardist should play only the bass line, without adding harmony and without doubling the at the octave. Georg Michael Telemann warned the player to ignore any figures in these places, which some composers added inadvertently or out of habit.<sup>20</sup>

According to both Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and Telemann, 'unison' and its synonyms (including '*all'ottava*') can also imply octave doubling.

G. F. Telemann: Where 'all'unisono' or 'unisoni' or (abbreviated) 'unis.' or

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<sup>17</sup> "Denn er ist nebst dem Violoncellisten gleichsam das Gleichgewicht, um das Zeitmaaß, in einer großen Musik, besonders in einem Orchester, wo einer den andren nicht allezeit sehen, noch recht hören kann, zu erhalten." Ibid. Quantz, *Versuch*, 218-19. Translated in Quantz and Reilly, *On Playing the Flute*, 247.

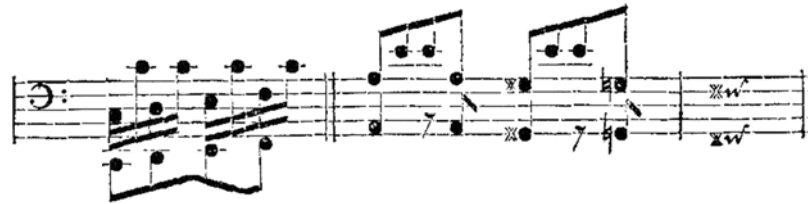
<sup>18</sup> "Deux Octaves de suite entre la partie inférieure des Accords, & la Basse, sont le même effet qu'une Basse doublée, selon l'usage où l'on est de la doubler avec la Contre-basse." Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Dissertation sur les différentes méthodes d'accompagnement pour le clavecin, ou pour l'orgue* (Paris: 1732), 61. Translated in Greenberg, "Perfecting the Storm," Par. 4.6.

<sup>19</sup> Arnold, *The Art of Accompaniment from a Thorough-Bass*, 414-17.

<sup>20</sup> Georg Michael Telemann, *Unterricht im Generalbass-Spielen* (Hamburg: 1773).

also ‘all’ottava’ appears, one must play the notes of the bass an octave higher with the right hand at the same time, without adding anything else; one can also take the lower octave in the left hand in these places.<sup>21</sup>

*Bach:* The octave is included in the meaning of the term *unison*. Thus when the parts progress either in real unisons or in octaves, they are said to move in unison, even when the figuration of one of the parts is different from that of the other.<sup>22</sup>



The Unison (C.P.E. Bach)

Bach’s example of “unison” octave doubling leaves notes in the higher register un-doubled, without comment. Corrette does not mention octave doubling in his discussion of the pedal tone and the term ‘tasto solo’ in *Le maître de clavecin*. He does, however, include an example of a pedal point doubled at the octave.<sup>23</sup>

#### *Improvised figuration on a slower-moving bass line*

After outlining how to discern the principal notes, Saint Lambert explains that in certain circumstances one might wish to *add* passagework to a slower-moving bass line.

Contrary to what we have just said, when the Basses are little burdened with notes & drag on too much for the liking of the Accompanist, he may then add other notes to embellish [the Bass] further – provided that he is

<sup>21</sup> “Wo ‘all’unisono’, oder ‘unisoni’, oder abbreviëret, ‘unis.’, oder auch ‘all’ottava’ stebet, muß man mit der rechten Hand zugleich die Noten des Basses eine Octave höher mitspielen, ohne etwas weiter hinzu zu nehmen; man kann aber alsdenn in der linken Hand auch noch die Octave drunter mitnehmen.” Telemann, *Unterricht im Generalbass-Spielen*, 103.

<sup>22</sup> “Unter dem Einklange wird hier die Octave mit begriffen. Wenn also bey einem Stücke mehr als eine Stimme im Einklange oder in Octaven einerley Fortschreitungen haben, so sagt man: die Stimmen gehen im Einklange (*all’unisono*), wenn auch schon die Figuren hiebey verschieden sind.” Carl Phillip Emanuel Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*, 2 ed. (Berlin: 1762), 172 Translated in Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and William J. Mitchell, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1949), 313.

<sup>23</sup> Michel Corrette, *Le maître de clavecin pour l’accompagnement, méthode théorique et pratique, avec des leçons chantantes où les accords sont notés* (Paris: 1753), 41-42.

certain that this will do no harm to the Air, nor above all to the solo part.<sup>24</sup>

Saint Lambert does not provide a model, but other treatises show embellished bass lines comparable to divisions or diminutions on a ground bass.



Bass-line diminutions (Gasparini)<sup>25</sup>

Heinichen's thorough presentation of *ex tempore* bass-line embellishments contain arpeggiations, *roulades*, and sixteenth-note runs.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> ...*Au contraire de ce que nous venons de dire ; Quand les Basses sont peu chargées de notes, & qu'elles traînent trop au gré de l'Accompagnateur, il peut y ajoûter d'autres notes pour figurer d'avantage, pourvu qu'il connoisse que cela ne fera point de tort à l'Air, & sur tout à la voix qui chante.* Saint-Lambert, *Nouveau traité de l'accompagnement*, 57. Translated in Saint-Lambert and Powell, *A New Treatise on Accompaniment*, 102.

<sup>25</sup> Francesco Gasparini, *L'armonico pratico al cimbalo* (Venice: 1708), 105. Gasparini's triple-meter examples are actually augmentations; they expand each quarter-note of the bass line to a full measure. David Watkin suggests that bass-line divisions like Gasparini's were used by bowed bassists to realize accompaniments. Watkin, "Corelli's Op.5 Sonatas: 'Violino e violone o cimbalo'?", 658.

<sup>26</sup> George J. Buelow, *Thorough-bass Accompaniment According to Johann David Heinichen*, 14 ed. (United States: University of Nebraska, 1992), 198-203, Johann David Heinichen, *Der General-Bass in der Composition* (Dresden: 1728), 565-77.



### Bass-line diminutions (Heinichen)<sup>27</sup>

Heinichen suggests improvising passage-work when there are repeated notes in the bass. Both Saint Lambert's and Heinichen's examples look very much like the bass lines which Corrette simplifies in the double bass method.



### Diminutions on repeated bass notes (Heinichen)<sup>28</sup>



<sup>27</sup> Heinichen, *Der General-Bass in der Komposition*, 566.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 575.

## Bass line simplified to repeated notes (Corrette)

### *Simplified bass line, doubled or not*

Saint Lambert recommends that the keyboardist plays the first note of each bar, leaving the more agile bass viols or bass violins to play the complete bass line since it is “easier for them”. (Note that he permits this even in slower tempi!)

When the measure is so hurried that the Accompanist cannot comfortably play all of the [bass] notes, he can then be content to play & accompany just the first [bass] note of each measure – and thus leave it for the Basses de Viole or the [Basses de] Violon to play all the bass notes; they can do this much more easily, since they have no accompaniment to combine with [their bass part]. Extremely fast tempi are not at all suited to accompanying [i.e., harmony] Instruments; this is why when the Accompanist encounters very fast passages (even in a slow measure [i.e., meter]), he may leave them to be played by the other Instruments; or, if he does play them, he can reshape this fast tempo by playing only the principal [bass] notes that fall on the principal beats of the measure.<sup>29</sup>

In the case of a bass line with rapid repeated notes, Heinichen expects the keyboard player to repeat chords at a slower pace and leave the faster notes to the other players. Interpretation will depend on both tempo and the placement of figures.

Finally, one must not allow himself to be misled by many quick repetitions of a note, for one repeats the previous chord in slower note values, one or more times (according to the opportunity [offered by] the meter), as long as no other figure occurs over such notes. And the performance of the quick bass notes is left to the other accompanying bass [instruments]. For example, these three measures:<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Quand la mesure est si presée que l'Accompagnateur n'a pas la commodité de jouer toutes les notes, il peut se contenter de jouer & d'accompagner seulement la premiere note de chaque mesure, laissant au Basses de Viole, ou de Violon à jouer toutes les notes ; ce qu'elles peuvent faire beaucoup plus aisement, n'ayant point d'accompagnement à y joindre. Les grandes vitesses ne conviennent point aux Instruments qui accompagnent ; c'est pourquoy quand il se trouve des passages fort vîtes, même dans une mesure lente, l'Accompagnateur let peut laisser jouer aux autres Instruments, ou s'il les jouë il peut reformer cette vitesse, en ne touchant que les notes principales de ces passages ; c'est-à-dire les notes qui tombent sur les principaux temps de la mesure. Saint-Lambert, Nouveau traité de l'accompagnement, 58. Translated in Saint-Lambert and Powell, *A New Treatise on Accompaniment*, 102.*

<sup>30</sup> *Endlich muß man sich die vielen, in einem Tone nach einander stehenden geschwinden Noten nicht irren lassen, sondern so lange über solchen Noten keine andere Ziffer erfolgt, so lange wiederholet man den vorigen Accord in langsamern Note ein oder mehr mahl (nach Gelegenheit der Mensur,) und lässet die Execution der geschwinden Bass-Noten denen übrigen accompagnierenden Bässen. Z. E. Diese 3. Tacte.” Heinichen, Der General-Bass in der Komposition, 377-78. Translated in Buelow, *Thorough-bass Accompaniment**





Bass Line with Rapid Repeated Notes (Heinichen)



The Same Bass Line, Simplified and Realized (Heinichen)

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach suggests doubling octaves for strength and volume, especially at imitative entrances. In “lively figuration”, one should double only the principal notes:

A simple octave doubling of the bass by the left hand also has a penetrating effect; it is indispensable when the notes are not very rapid and are easily played, but yet express a well-defined theme with a fairly wide range. These octave doublings are very good for imitations which are to be loudly performed or for the entrance of fugal subjects. But when a subject or any passage of significance contains lively figuration which cannot easily be executed by one hand in octaves, at least the principal tones should be doubled and the others played simply.<sup>31</sup>

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According to Johann David Heinichen, 202.

<sup>31</sup> “Die blosse Verdoppelung der Grundnoten mit der Octave in der linken Hand ist ebenfalls von einer durchdringenden Wirkung, und alsdenn unentbehrlich, wenn diese Noten nicht sehr geschwind sind, und leicht heraus gebracht werden können, dabey aber einen gewissen Gesang enthalten, welcher eineziemliche Weite einnimmt. Bey Fugen, wenn das Thema eintritt, bey Nachahmungen, welche stark vorgetragen werden aber bey einem Thema, oder überhaupt bey einem Gedanken, welcher einen besondern Ausdruck erfordert, einige bunte Figuren vorkommen, welche mit einer Hand in Octaven nicht wohl heraus gebracht werden können: so verdoppelt man wenigstens die Hauptnoten, und spielt die übrigen einfach (a).” Bach, *Versuch*, 246. Translated in Bach and Mitchell, *Essay*, 369.



Simplified Octave Doubling (C.P.E. Bach)

Bach encouraged the player to simplify the popular ‘murky basses’ (basses in rapidly alternating octaves) or ‘Trommelbasses’ (basses of steady repetitions of the same pitch) with fortissimo passages in doubled octaves.<sup>32</sup>

I take this opportunity to express my thoughts on the performance of quick repetitions in the left hand for the benefit of those who are charged with the task of playing thorough bass. The device, an everyday occurrence in the present style, offers great risk of stiffening and ruining the best of hands. This remark can stand as a good argument against those who expressly ask that all notes written for the left hand be performed. Certainly the right hand is not required to accompany all the notes, particularly when the bass contains so common a device as the passing tone. The quick repetitions of whose hazards I speak are eighth notes in rapid, and sixteenths in more moderate tempos. Further, I assume that another instrument is playing the bass with the keyboard. When it plays alone, these notes, like the tremolo, must be performed with alternating fingers. Although the consequent omission of the octave will detract from the sonority of the bass, this small defect is to be preferred to other greater evils. With an accompanying bass instrument it is best to omit one, three, or five notes according to the tempo and meter and strike the others in octaves (or double octaves with both hands in a fortissimo), employing a heavy attack, somewhat sustained so that the strings will vibrate sufficiently and the tones blend with each other.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Translation: James Webster. “Bey dieser Gelegenheit merke ich hier beyläufig mit an, daß man von mehreren kurzen Noten, die einen und eben denselben Ton bezeichnen, wie unten bey c), auch im Basse bloß die Tatzglieder d), oder höchstens nur die guten Noten mit zu spielen braucht e). Außerdem könnte man diese so genannten Trommelbässe etwa so abändern, wie bey f). Denn nicht zunächst für den Generalbaßspieler schrieb der Tonsetzer solche Figuren nieder; man verändert sie daher so, wie sie auf Klavierinstrumenten heraus zu bringen find.” Daniel Gottlob Türk, *Anweisung zum Generalbaßspielen* (Leipzig: 1800), 334.

<sup>33</sup> Ich habe für nothing gefunden denen zu Gefallen, welchen das Amt den General Bass zu spielen aufgetragen ist, meine Gedanken über die Art geschwinde Noten auf einem Tone mit der linken Hand abzufertigen, bey dieser Gelegenheit zu eröffnen. Es ist dieses sonst die sicherste Gelegenheit, wodurch die besten Hände verdorben und steif werden können, indem der gleichen Noten bey unserer jetzigen Getz-Art sehr gewöhnlich sind. Es können ferner diejenigen durch diese Anmerkung sich rechtfertigen, vol welchen ausdrücklich verlangt wird, alle Noten mit der linken Hand auszudrücken. Da das Durchgehen der Noten im General-Basse überhaupt

Thus Bach justifies altering a technically challenging bass line in order to avoid the risk of injury. Daniel Gottlob Türk also recommended that “Trommelbasses” be simplified:

In this context I observe in passing that in the case of many fast repeated notes, as in [example] c below; one can play in the bass simply the onbeat notes [example] d, or at most only every other note [i.e., the “good notes”] as in [example] e. Also one could alter this so-called Trommelbass as in [example] f. For the composer does not write such figures for the continuo player in the first instance; one therefore changes them in such a way that they can be brought out on a keyboard instrument.

Could Bach’s reference above to “those who expressly ask that all notes written for the left hand be performed” be directed at Quantz?

If many quavers appear on one note, he [the keyboard player] must strike them all, and must not, for the sake of an ill-timed convenience, strike one and then allow three or even seven to go by, as some do occasionally, especially in vocal pieces.<sup>34</sup>

While Quantz expected the keyboard player to adhere to the composed bass line, upper parts were still flexible:

The general rule of thorough-bass is that you always play in four parts; yet if you wish to accompany well, a better effect is often produced if you do not bind yourself very strictly to this rule, and if you leave out some parts, or even double the bass line an octave higher with the right hand. For just as a composer is neither able nor compelled to set a three-, four-, or five-part instrumental accompaniment to all melodies, lest they become

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*bekannt genug ist, so versteht es sich von selbst, daß die rechte Hand, in diesem Falle ebenfalls nicht alle Noten anschlägt. Die geschwinden Noten auf einem Tone, von deren Schädlichkeit ich spreche, sind die acht-Theile im geschwinden Zeit-Maasse, und im gemäßigten die Sechszehn-Theile. Ich setze ferner zum voraus, daß ausser dem Claviere noch ein anderes Instrument den Baß mitspielt. Ist das Clavier alleine, so spielt man solche Noten, wie die Schwärmer, mit abgewechselten Fingern. Es wird zwar auf diese Art, durch hinweglassung der Octave, der Baß nicht allezeit durchbringend genug senn, man muß aber diese kleine Unvollkommenheit andern grössern Uebeln vorziehen. Man thut also am besten, man läßt von solchen Noten nach Beschaffenheit des Zeit-Maasses und der Tact-Art, eine, drey, oder fünffe ohne Anschlag durchgehen, die anzuschlagenden spielt man mit der Octave auch wohl bey fortissimo mit beyden vollen Händen, mit Schweren Anschlägen, etwas unterhalten, damit die Sayten genugsahm zittern können, und ein Ton sich mit dem andern wohl vereinige. Bach, Versuch, 5. (Footnote to paragraph 9.) Translated in Bach and Mitchell, Essay, 32-33.*

<sup>34</sup> Quantz and Reilly, *On Playing the Flute*, 264-65. “Er, wenn viele Achtttheile auf einem Tone vorkommen, dieselben mit der linken Hand alle anschlage; nicht aber, wie einige aus unzeitiger Bequemlichkeit zuweilen, absonderlich bey Singstücken, thun, eine anschlage, und drey oder wohl gar sieben vorbey streichen lasse.” Quantz, *Versuch*, 237-38. Emanuel Bach served in the Prussian court orchestra under Quantz’s direction.

unintelligible or obscure, so not every melody allows an accompaniment of full chords upon the keyboard; hence an accompanist must govern himself more by the individual case than by the general rules of thorough-bass.

### *Arguments for and against bass-line reduction*

Playing chords above only those bass notes with the greatest rhythmic and harmonic impact was considered “graceful” by Saint Lambert. Most other early keyboard treatises describe a similar aesthetic, with the idea that right-hand chords on every bass note would be obstructive and sometimes technically prohibitive. Double bassists had corresponding reasons for reducing their parts to the principal notes: they could help to propel the ensemble and prevent muddy orchestral textures while affording some discretion in the management of thick strings that were slow to speak. Yet they encountered criticism for doing so beginning around the mid-eighteenth century.

Quantz, who had some experience playing double bass very early in his career, takes a serious tone about bass line reduction in 1752:

If in a bass part passage-work appears which, because of its great rapidity, the double bass player is unable to execute distinctly, he may play only the first, third, or last note of each figure, whether they are semi-quavers or demisemiquavers. In each case he must determine which notes are the principal notes in the bass melody.



### *Ex Tempore Double Bass Simplification (Quantz)*

Except in passage-work of this sort, however, which some find too difficult to play rapidly, the bass player must omit nothing. If he were to play only the first of four quavers that appear on the same pitch, passing over three, as some do at times, especially if they have to accompany a piece that they did not compose themselves, I do not know how he could avoid an accusation of laziness or malice.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Quantz and Reilly, *On Playing the Flute*, 249-50. “Wenn in einem Basse solche Passagen vorkämen, die der Violonist, wegen großer Geschwindigkeit, deutlich zu spielen nicht im Stande wäre; so kann er von einer

A quarter-century later, Corrette's approach is more practical. Composers must provide appropriate double bass parts, or players will adapt what they are given.

To wish to play all the notes is to wish to make a racket, particularly when there are several double basses. It is necessary, then, to play only the principal notes of the harmony in order for this instrument to have a good effect.<sup>36</sup>

In a large ensemble where there are several double bassists, one ought to give them each the same simplified part, where the principal notes of the harmony are written out. The outcome will be more beautiful and more correct.<sup>37</sup>

Concerned enough about sections with "several double basses" that he mentions them twice, Corrette's remarks appear to respond to a statement by Louis Francoeur the prior year:

The double bass part is the same as that for the cello, save the notes that are too fast, which are left out. Composers do not trouble themselves to make this reduction; they leave this to the double bassists, who are in the habit of doing it. One doesn't write a separate part for the double bass unless one has a particular intention or plan for it.<sup>38</sup>

The impression we get is negative and problematic: music that is "too difficult" or "too fast" must be "simplified" or there will be a "racket"; double bassists are leaving notes out due to "laziness" and "malice". Unlike keyboard players, double bassists only had to play one note at a time. Were they in fact lazy, inept, and spiteful? While perhaps some were, that can't be the whole story. Sixteen-foot bowed basses had been part of the continuo group for at least half a century

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jeden Figur, sie mag zwey- oder dreimal geschwänzt sein, die erste, dritte, oder letzte Note spielen. Er muß sich nur allezeit nach den Hauptnoten, so eine Baßmelodie ausmachen, zu richten suchen. Folgende Exempel geben darzu Anleitung. ...Außer dergleichen, in großer Geschwindigkeit nicht einem Jeden bequemen Passagien aber, ist der Violonist verbunden alles mitzuspielen. Wollte er von vier auf einerley Tone vorkommenden Achttheilen, wie einige zuweilen thun, zumal wenn sie ein Stück accompagnieren müssen, das sie nicht selbst gesetzt haben, immer das erste anschlagen, und drey vorben geben lassen; so weis ich nicht wie er der Nachrede einer Faulheit oder Tücke entgehen könnte." Quantz, *Versuch*, 221. Quantz and Reilly, *On Playing the Flute*, xii.

<sup>36</sup> Corrette, *Contre-basse/alto/viole d'Orphée*, 5.

<sup>37</sup> Corrette, *Contre-basse/alto/viole d'Orphée*, 10.

<sup>38</sup> Francoeur and Choron, *Traité general des voix et des instruments d'orchestre principalement des instruments à vent, à l'usage des compositeurs*.1772. "La partie de contre Basse est la même que celle du Violoncelle, sauf les notes trop rapide que l'on supprime. Les compositeurs ne se donnent pas la peine de faire eux-mêmes cette réduction ; ils la laissent faire aux contrebassistes, qui en ont l'habitude. On n'écrit séparément la partie de contrebasse que lors qu'elle renferme quelque intention ou dessin particulière."

before Quantz logged his complaints.<sup>39</sup> And despite strong language, Quantz's admonitions do not actually contraindicate bass-line reduction. That the player is given leave to alter his part at all is significant; certainly no *ripieno* violinist would be permitted such a liberty.

Quantz assumes that his compositions are playable and has no intention of providing a reduced double bass part. He permits simplifications only in fast passagework that the double bassist is "unable to execute cleanly", encouraging players to develop their technique commensurate with cellists. Most, he says, could easily play as high as G.<sup>40</sup> This points to a reasonably high standard of playing and musicianship. Corrette expects reduction as a matter of artistry, as opposed to incompetence or laziness. Francoeur trusts the player to reduce any part that is too fast on his own, and sees no need for composers to provide separate parts save for special circumstances.

Double bass simplifications do appear in published scores of eighteenth-century French operas with *symphonies descriptives*: storms, earthquakes, and supernatural occurrences.<sup>41</sup> These events were often orchestrated with multiple bass parts for special effect. Often the double bass played pulsating repeated notes while other bass instruments played more complicated parts. Regardless of technical difficulty, distinctness is not the point of these dramatic passages, in which the full complement of low instruments maximizes texture, timbre, and resonance. These bass lines were perceived as exciting rather than slothful, and in fact helped the double bass to gain a reputation as an important orchestral instrument in France.

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<sup>39</sup> See Tharald Borgir, *The Performance of the Basso Continuo in Italian Baroque Music* (Ann Arbor, 1987), 31-35.

<sup>40</sup> Quantz, *Versuch*, 221.

<sup>41</sup> See Caroline Wood, "Orchestra and Spectacle in the Tragédie en Musique 1673-1715: Oracle, Sommeil and Tempête.," *Royal Musical Association, London. Proceedings* (1982). For a list of *symphonies descriptives* that include the double bass, see Greenberg, "Perfecting the Storm," Par. 4.4.



Marais, *Tempête* from *Alcyone* (1706)

It's not clear whether Corrette's double bass method is intended for amateurs or professionals; mostly likely, it is for some combination of the two. According to Corrette, the first double bassist employed at the Paris Opera was Michel Pignolet de Monteclair.<sup>42</sup> Monteclair originally played *basse de violon* in the Opera's elite *Petit Choeur* and is thought to have begun playing double bass soon after the turn of the 18th century. Even if it took him some time to develop proficiency on the instrument, the special effect scenes mentioned above would have been impressive.

As an educator and publisher, Corrette dealt with dilettantes regularly and benefited from their patronage. One passage in the introduction to his *Nouveau Livre de Noël*s demonstrates his attention to this audience. These are keyboard pieces, but Corrette describes an orchestration in which violins and flutes play the treble staff and viols and cellos play the bass. If the cellist finds higher passages too difficult, Corrette advises playing only the principal notes of *batteries*, taking them down an octave, or simply remaining tacet.

The viol and cello will observe that beyond the D at the top of the F [bass] clef, all the other notes above are notated in the G [treble] clef. This involves shifting on the cello, but those who find the passages too difficult only have to play the principal notes of *batteries* which are always the first note of each beat of the measure, or play them an octave lower, or remain

<sup>42</sup> Corrette, *Contre-basse/ alto/ viole d'Orphée*, 1. Grove Online, "Monteclair". James R. Anthony, Oxford Music Online, 2001.

silent until the notes appear in the F clef.<sup>43</sup>

### *Quantz and Corrette on double bass reduction*

The three accounts of Quantz, Francoeur and Corrette are separated by over a quarter-century and represent differing musical traditions and perspectives. Nonetheless, all convey that during the mid- to late-eighteenth century, double bassists simplified their parts *ad libitum* – for purposes of either ease or artistry – and composers to some extent expected them to do so. Because they spoke out only when bass-line reduction became problematic, the implication is that earlier it had been the norm. Surely it is no accident that this happened as keyboardists and their improvised continuo lines were disappearing from the orchestral ensemble. Just as violinists and flutists learned to avoid adding inappropriate ornamentation in the orchestra, so double bassists eventually had to learn to play their music as written.<sup>44</sup>

Detailed comments and examples of doubled bass lines in the keyboard continuo manuals discussed above appear in revised and expanded versions of these works. Saint Lambert's *Les principes du clavecin* (the earliest accompaniment method for the harpsichord) deals largely with fundamentals: notation, metre, fingerings, and so forth; his *Nouveau Traité* digs deeper into performance practices for the experienced accompanist.<sup>45</sup> Johann David Heinichen's *Der Generalbass in der Composition* (1728) expanded his *Neu erfundene und gründliche Anweisung... zu vollkommener Erlernung des General-Basses* (1711) and Bach's *Versuch* (1753) was revised and expanded in 1762. All of these expanded works predate Corrette's double bass method (1773). This hardly needs explanation, given the predominance of eighteenth-century keyboard culture and the relatively late addition of double bass to the basso continuo, particularly in France. The double

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<sup>43</sup> “La Viole et le Violoncelle remarqueront que passé le ré au dessus de la Clef de Fa, toutes les autres notes audessus sont notes sur la Clef de Sol, ce qui engage a démancer sur le Violoncelle, mais ceux qui trouveront des passages trop difficiles n’auront qu’a ne jouer que les principales notes des batteries qui sont toujours les premiers notes de chaque tems de la mesure, ou les joier a l’Octave d’enas ou garder le Tacet jusqu’a ce qu’ils trouvent des notes sur la Clef de Fa.” Michel Corrette, *Nouveau Livre de Noël avec un Carillon pour le Clavecin ou l’Orgue* (Paris: 1753), A. Corrette’s simplification suggestions here are quite similar to those in the double bass method.

About *batterirs*: In his mandolin method, Corrette writes, “On nomme Batteries, deux Notes sur différent degres battues l’une a prés l’autre plusieurs fois.” He gives several examples of patterns with two alternating pitches. He continues, “L’Arpeggio est une batterie de trois notes sur trois cordes différentes...” Corrette, *Mandoline*, 26-29.

<sup>44</sup> See Spitzer and Zaslaw, *Birth of the Orchestra*. “Improvised Ornamentation”, pages 380-384. Neither Corrette nor Quantz discusses any ornaments that may be used on the double bass.

<sup>45</sup> Michel de Saint-Lambert and Rebecca Harris-Warrick, *Principles of the Harpsichord, Cambridge musical texts and monographs* (Cambridge, Cambridgeshire ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), Saint-Lambert, *Nouveau traité de l’accompagnement*.



bass/viola/*viola d'Orphée* method, addressing two marginal instruments and one that Corrette made up, had a comparatively tiny market. By the time it appeared, composers were gradually writing more independent parts for the double bass. However, since the instrument still shared most of its material with the cello, many subsequent methods addressed reduction well into the nineteenth century and even beyond.<sup>46</sup>

Quantz says that in very rapid passagework, that the double bassist “may play only the first, third, or last note of each figure” according to the principal notes of the “bass melody”. He gives no instruction in the *Versuch* on how to determine these, even for the keyboard player: there are plenty of resources for anyone who wants to learn, he says.<sup>47</sup> Quantz’s reductions comprise eleven measures total, primarily in sixteenth-notes, with no tempo markings or figures. The double bass part is differentiated from the primary bass line with downward stems. Though brief, these examples demonstrate simplifications of scales, arpeggiations, roulades, repeated notes, and *tirades*. (Figure repeated for convenience.)



#### *Ex Tempore* Double Bass Simplification (Quantz)

The double bass part retains the first of each group of sixteenth-notes, plus either the third or fourth. Quantz favors the dotted rhythm achieved by adding the last of each group of quick notes in arpeggiations, *roulades*, repeated pitches, and *tirades* (Fig. 1, measures 1,2, 4 and 5; Fig. 2). In scalar passages, alternating leaps (which Corrette calls *batterirs* or *batteries*), and notes repeated only once,

<sup>46</sup> The practice of double bass reduction stretched on well into the nineteenth century. For a discussion see Brun, *A New History of the Double Bass*, 75-80; Nachtergaele, Shanti, “From divisions to divisi: improvisation, orchestration, and the practice of double bass reduction”, Volume 46, Issue 3, 23 November 2018, 483–500.

<sup>47</sup> Quantz, *Versuch*, 223.

Quantz adds the third sixteenth-note (Fig 1, measures 3, 4, 5 and 6). Figure 3, measure 2 includes an unexplained “extra” sixteenth-note that perhaps helps to direct the “bass melody” evenly.

Corrette’s examples are considerably more extensive. Each is a self-contained movement, with varying tempi and time signatures. Primary bass lines (marked cello, *basse continuë*, *organo*, and *viole d’Orphée*) and double bass parts are notated on separate staves. Corrette’s verbal instructions are more guidelines than hard-and-fast rules, and he implies further trends when he breaks them.

When there are *batterirs* [alternating pitches] or arpeggiations, the double bass should only play the bottom notes...and in *roulades* only the first note of each beat...but the double bass plays all of the notes in slow movements such as adagio, andante, etc.

*Direct instructions:*

- *Batterirs* (rapidly alternating pitches) and arpeggiations: play the lowest note (implied: may be repeated)
- *Roulades*: play only the first note (implied: may be repeated)
- Play all figured notes plus any unfigured tonic and dominant pitches:
- Do not play passages notated in subsidiary clefs (“*des petites clefs*”).<sup>48</sup>
- Play all of the notes in slow movements

*Implied:*

- Repeated sixteenth-notes may be simplified to eighth-notes.
- When the bass leaps to a repeated note, play only the first pitch

*A few unexplained anomalies:*

- Four repeated sixteenth-notes become either eighth-notes with rests or quarter notes; eighteenth-century execution would have been similar in each case.
- Occasionally Corrette includes sixteenth-notes from the original bass line.
- Sometimes chord tones outside the primary bass line are given to the double bass.

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<sup>48</sup> Though not strictly simplification, Corrette’s instruction to remain silent while subsidiary clefs are in effect speaks to the double bassist’s role as orchestral colorist. High-register passages in which the treble instruments played the lowest part and the bass instruments kept silence were known as “bassetti”. This execution was assumed for all passages for which the continuo part was notated in C or G clefs. Arnold, *The Art of Accompaniment from a Thorough-Bass*, 373. Haydn later indicated the cello’s participation in high-register passages by inserting the tenor clef; it is assumed that the double bass was tacet, and some written indications confirm this.

- Pickups may be temporally displaced, with the dominant scale degree played in the double bass before it appears in the primary bass.

Why does Corrette simplify a bass line marked “andante” after just having instructed the double bassist to play all of the notes in slow movements? The bass line is rather elaborate in his example, with many alternating leaps in sixteenth-notes, so the reduction might equally be for musical or technical reasons. Despite his apparent contradiction, Corrette seems to understand the term *andante* to mean not a slow tempo but a moderate one – as it generally did in the late eighteenth century.<sup>49</sup>



The table below compares how Corrette and Quantz reduce similar types of passagework. In some cases the notes are very similar or nearly identical.

Idiomatic figuration simplified by Corrette and Quantz

*Arpeggiated sixteenth-notes:*



Quantz, Figure 1:1



Corrette, Allegro p. 15:20-21

*Roulades:*

<sup>49</sup> See Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 290-91, 336-37, 51-61.



Quantz, Figure 1: 2



Corrette, Allegro p. 14: 2-3

### *Descending thirds*



Quantz, Figure 1:



Corrette, Allegro p. 11:32

### *Scales:*



Quantz, Figure 1, m. 3



Corrette, Allegro p. 11:2

### *Repeated notes:*



Quantz, Figure 1:5



Corrette, Allegro p. 11:4-7

### *Leaps:*



Quantz, Figure 1:4



Corrette, Allegro p. 14:9

### *Composed reductions and separate double bass parts*

Corrette makes the point that the double bassist should work with bass line pitches as written rather than playing only the roots or the *basse fondamentale*, according to Rameau's theory.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Rameau had presented his theory of the fundamental bass in his *Traité de l'harmonie* of 1722 and refined it in both published and unpublished works throughout the rest of his career.. Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Traité de l'harmonie reduite à ses principes naturels* (Paris: 1722). Corrette presented Rameau's theory of the fundamental bass in *Le maître de clavecin*, but quite logically found it inappropriate for application to double bass parts. Corrette, *Le maître de clavecin*, 69-71.

It is unnecessary to determine the root of each chord. The principal notes of the *basso continuo* are sufficient and provide more variety than playing only roots, which would only yield a monotonous harmony. If double bassists have different opinions on this subject, it only demonstrates how important it is to give each the same [simplified] part, in order to avoid cacophony. All the Italian double bassists anchor themselves to nothing but the *basso continuo* and they are right about it.

Saggioni, whom Corrette names with Montéclair as good composers and the first double bassists at the Opera, was of Italian descent. Montéclair himself worked in Italy for some time.<sup>51</sup> Theobaldo di Gatti (known as Théobalde) is another Italian expatriate particularly associated with the early use of double bass in the Paris Opéra.<sup>52</sup> Corrette does not mention Théobalde, nor any contemporary double bassists still working at the Opéra in the 1770s. Pietro Gianotti – also Italian – was employed there from 1739 to 1758 as a double bass player and gained some reputation as a teacher and composer.<sup>53</sup> His most important work was *Le guide de compositeur* (1759), a revised version of an unpublished Rameau manuscript titled *L'art de la basse fondamentale* (ca 1737-1744).<sup>54</sup> One wonders whether Corrette's objection above has anything to do with Gianotti's performance practice at the Opera. Gianotti's own accompaniment method, *Méthode qui abrège les règles en usage, pour apprendre l'accompagnement du clavessin* (Paris: LeClerc, 1764), might offer some clues, but it is unfortunately missing.

In 1776 there were five double bass players in the Opera.<sup>55</sup> It would certainly cause confusion if some were changing the bass notes to roots and others were not. A definitive separate double bass part would have solved this problem. Extant reduced double bass parts from Rameau's tenure at the Paris Opera do sometimes give the double basses the root where other bass instruments play another element of the chord.<sup>56</sup> We have no example of a separate double bass

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<sup>51</sup> Greenberg, par. 3.2

<sup>52</sup> Greenberg, par. 4.1

<sup>53</sup> For a list of Gianotti's works, see Lauren M. Longo, "Pietro Gianotti's 'Le guide du compositeur': A Reworking of Rameau's 'L'art de la basse fondamentale': An Annotated Translation and Critical Edition of Part I." (Ph.D., City University of New York, 1997), 20-21.

<sup>54</sup> Jean-Philippe Rameau, "L'art de la basse fondamentale," (ca 1739-1744). Thomas Christensen, *Rameau and Musical Thought in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 309-12, Longo, "Gianotti's 'Le guide du compositeur'", 10.

<sup>55</sup> Spitzer and Zaslav, *The Birth of the Orchestra*, 189.

<sup>56</sup> See Mary Cyr, "Basses and Basse Continue in the Orchestra of the Paris Opéra 1700-1764,"

part from Corrette outside of his double bass method. Quantz does not address the issue of multiple double bassists. Perhaps this was not a problem for him, whether because fewer or more accomplished players were employed.

Simplified double bass parts also survive in parts and scores of the Vienna Court Opera between 1705 and 1740.<sup>57</sup> Dagmar Gluxam observes that the occasional composed simplifications in these materials are embedded in quite challenging bass parts. Citing contemporary witnesses to the high playing standards of the double bassists for whom these parts were provided, she concludes that the reductions are mainly for aesthetic reasons.<sup>58</sup> As compelling as this kind of evidence may be, we need to keep in mind that according to Quantz and Corrette most bass-line reduction was done at sight. The majority of bass lines do not necessarily require any reduction, so writing separate parts was likely not time-efficient for composers or copyists. Even when they did so, players may have imposed further simplifications.

### *Conclusions*

Collectively, keyboard manuals tell us that continuo accompaniment requires quick thinking and experimentation.<sup>59</sup> It should optimize performance circumstances such as tempo, venue, ensemble size, and available instrumentation. Time and again, writers stress that the player must sacrifice virtuosic display to the greater good of refined performance, in which the principal part (i.e. the soloist or melody) is served above all. Saint Lambert once again sums it up:

For the Accompanist is only made to support the voice, & not to stifle or disfigure it by [making] a noisy clamor. There are those Accompanists who have such a good opinion of themselves that (believing themselves to be worth more than the rest of the Ensemble) they strive to outshine all of the Players. They burden the Thoroughbass with divisions; they embellish the Accompaniments, & do a hundred other things that are perhaps very lovely in themselves – but which are at the same time extremely

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*Early Music* 10, no. 2 (1982). 163

<sup>57</sup> Dagmar Gluxam, *Instrumentation und Instrumentalstil in der Wiener Oper 1705-1740* (in press). I am grateful to Dagmar Gluxam for providing the text of her book prior to publication and to Neal Zaslaw for making me aware of the passages on double bass simplification.

<sup>58</sup> Gluxam, *Instrumentation und Instrumentalstil in der Wiener Oper 1705-1740*, 412-18. On the school of Viennese virtuosi, see Focht, *Der Wiener Kontrabass: Spieltechnik und Aufführungspraxis, Musik und Instrumente* and Adolf Meier, *Konzertante Musik für Kontrabass in der Wiener Klassik* (Giebing über Prien am Chiemsee: E. Katzbichler, 1969).

<sup>59</sup> Arnold, *The Art of Accompaniment from a Thorough-Bass*, 382.

detrimental to the Ensemble, & just serve to show the vain conceit of the Musician who produces them. Whoever plays in Ensemble ought to play for the honor & the perfection of the Ensemble, & not for his own personal honor. It is no longer an Ensemble when everyone plays just for himself.<sup>60</sup>

The largest, lowest, and loudest of the strings, the double bass carries significant power and therefore significant responsibility for the musical motion of the ensemble. This is why both Quantz and Corrette insist that the double bassist needs refined taste and an understanding of composition. Even when playing all of the notes, the double bassist is obliged to observe the hierarchy of beats (the “good and bad” notes) and bring out important harmonic events. Keyboard players did this by playing chords and figuration based on the principal notes, and sometimes by doubling the bass line at the octave. Double bassists used volume and, to some extent, articulation. Strategically leaving out some notes that must be played softly anyway is a logical device for both instruments. As part of the continuo group, eighteenth century double bassists worked closely with keyboardists and often shared a part with them. They likely had some keyboard training as part of their education. It stands to reason that they would pick up a few tricks.

Corrette does not say outright that double bass players simplified because of technical limitations, but we have reason to believe this could have been a factor. Though Quantz decries the practice, he still provides instructions on how to do it. What are we to make of this? We can say conclusively only that double bass line reduction was common in the eighteenth century, and that it was both an artistic resource and something of a problem. Today’s professional double bassists have no technical difficulties in performing Baroque and Classical repertoire, so virtually all interpretive decisions can serve the music first and foremost. When choosing whether to play all of the notes, fewer of them, or something in between, it only makes sense for double bassists to consider the roots of their instrument in the continuo group and borrow liberally from the keyboard continuo player’s toolbox.

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<sup>60</sup> “Car l’Accompagnement est fait pour seconder la voix, & non pas pour l’étouffer ou la défigurer par un mauvais carillon. Il y a des Accompagnateurs qui ont si bonne opinion d’eux memes que croyant valoir seuls plus que le resté u Concert, ils s’efforcent de briller par dessus tous les Concertans. Ils chargent les Basses-Continuës de passages; Ils figurent les Accompagnements, & sont cent autres choses qui sont peut-être fort bellese en elles-mêmes; mais qui pour lors nuisent extrêmement au Concert, & ne servent qu’à montrer l’habile vanité du Musicien qui les produit. Quiconque jouë en Concert doit jouër pour l’honneur & la perfection du Concert, & non pas pour son bonheur particulier. Ce n’est plus un Concert quand chacun nu jouë que pour soy.” Saint-Lambert, *Nouveau traité de l’accompagnement*, 58. Saint-Lambert and Powell, *A New Treatise on Accompaniment*, 102-03. See also Bach, *Versuch*, 243.

## MUSIC REVIEW

*Restoration Music for Three Violins, Bass Viol and Continuo*, edited by Peter Holman and John Cunningham. *Musica Britannica* volume 103: Stainer and Bell, London, 2018. £99.00

Sets of string parts:

Restoration Music for Three Violins, Bass Viol and Continuo, Set 1  
Ref. Y350 (fantasia suites by John Jenkins); £27.50

Restoration Music for Three Violins, Bass Viol and Continuo, Set 2  
Ref. Y351 (works by Baltzar, Isaack, Matteis and Finger); £27.50

This *Musica Britannica* edition of works for the comparatively rare combination of three violins, bass viol and chordal continuo delivers far more than an interesting addition to the repertory. Not only does it underline the role of Continental composers in post-Restoration English musical life but it also provides a new perspective upon the musical background of Henry Purcell, although his own contributions to the three-violin genre, the Pavan in G minor (Z.752) and 'Three Parts upon a Ground' (Z.731), are omitted for the entirely valid reason that they fall within the remit of another scholarly edition.

Important as the Continental musicians Baltzar, Matteis and Finger are, the backbone of the edition, and the most significant music it contains, is the series of ten suites by John Jenkins (VDGS Group 8), each consisting of a fantasia followed by an air or alman and a corant or saraband. Probably written for the 'Broken Consort' in Charles II's Private Music, in which Jenkins might have played as a lutenist, they represent an extraordinary achievement by a composer in his late 60s, not only in their sheer quality but also in Jenkins's imaginative response to modern continuo-based approaches in general and to the sonority of the three-violin combination in particular. Complete equality between the three violins is a characteristic of the repertory as a whole, and for that reason textures constantly shift as parts cross and recross, often in Italianate patterns of dissonance and resolution; virtuosic division writing is largely avoided, the music's effect deriving from its persuasive melodic and formal argument, rhetorical gestures and antiphonal exchanges between the instruments. With the exception of the final fantasia, which mostly involves the successive working-out of two sets of imitative ideas, the fantasias are multisectional, featuring changes of time and tempo, and in movements of all kinds the string bass, and often the simpler chordal continuo bass as well, are melodically equivalent to the higher parts and play a comparable role in imitation. This is exciting, sophisticated music, and the new edition should perhaps lead to a re-evaluation of Jenkins's influence on Purcell not only in the obvious instance of his three-violin Pavan but also in his fantasias and sonatas for other instrumental combinations; the three-violin suites probably formed part of the court repertory for little more than eighteen months during



Purcell's infancy, as it was only between the appointment of Thomas Baltzar to the Private Music in December 1661 and his death in July 1663 that the Broken Consort could have mustered three violinists, but the surviving sources both date from around twenty years later and, though imperfect, bear witness to the music's wider circulation and enduring reputation. One, *D-Hs*, ND VI 3193, belonged to the London merchant Sir Gabriel Roberts, who as an established and wealthy figure in the 1680s seems to have commissioned new partbook sets of his favourite instrumental music, which ranged from Lawes to a selection of Italian sonatas included in another set bearing his name, *GB-Lbl*, Add. MS 31431.

Purcell's second three-treble work, the partly canonic 'Three Parts upon a Ground', is more modern in character than the Pavan and hints at his relationship with his contemporaries rather than his predecessors. The Ground in A minor by Bartholomew Isaack, a Chapel Royal chorister until 1676 and so probably a few years younger than Purcell, resembles the latter's work not only in its general character, division writing and use of a traditional ground bass pattern but also in its inclusion of passages of strict and ingenious canon. Its unique source, *US-NYp* Drexel 5061, contains copies of Purcell's fantasias which appear to have been transcribed directly from Purcell's autograph, in many cases before the dated sequence of four-part fantasias had been finished: four-part fantasia 10 (dated 30 June in *GB-Lbl* Add. 30930) is followed in Drexel 5061 by an extra terminal flourish, as if the copyist thought it was the last in a series although the two fantasias bearing dates in August were still to follow. The Drexel manuscript must, therefore, have originated within Purcell's immediate circle of friends and colleagues; it originally consisted of separate, unbound sections and cannot necessarily be dated as a whole from the 1680 fantasia sequence, making it possible that Isaack's ground was in fact written alongside Purcell's rather than in subsequent imitation of it. In either case, it is an interesting and attractive work which, although shorter and less accomplished than 'Three Parts on a Ground', reflects a promise sadly unfulfilled in Isaack's later life.

The remaining works in the volume were composed by Continental musicians who spent much of their working lives in England. The virtuoso violinist Thomas Baltzar arrived in this country in the mid-1650s and quickly made his mark performing in private houses and elsewhere, including William Ellis's public music meeting at Oxford; there, if not previously, he encountered Edward Lowe, whose manuscripts in the Oxford Music School collection are the only sources of Baltzar's consort music. The three-violin suite consists of a substantial pavan and galliard pair, clearly intended to form a unit within the suite as a whole because the galliard has an extended duple-time coda, followed by multiple almans, corants and sarabands. If, as is probable, readers of this journal already recognize John Jenkins as a great composer, Baltzar's suite will probably constitute the volume's outstanding revelation: the pavan in particular is profoundly impressive, most notably in its third strain, where semiquaver passagework is set against other rhythmic patterns, and a range of evidence

supports Peter Holman's earlier suggestion that the suite was composed after Baltzar joined the two existing violinists in Charles II's Private Music, which may, of course, have been some time before his official retrospective appointment from Midsummer 1661.<sup>1</sup> Lowe, who dated his copy of one of the two-violin suites 25 February 1659/60, would surely have added this splendid work if it had been available then instead of waiting until around 1674, and although only the first violin part actually requires the player to 'run his fingers to the end of the finger-board of the violin', as Wood saw Baltzar do at Ellis's in 1658,<sup>2</sup> the music clearly calls for three accomplished performers.

It is very likely that Baltzar came to England in 1655 in the entourage of the Swedish Ambassador, Christer Bonde, and while his musicianship and technical ability must have played a major role in his evident success, Wood's description of his encounters with Baltzar suggests that the great violinist was good company and not above playing alongside amateurs as well as other professional musicians. Possibly his sociability led to the tragically early death Wood ascribes in one place to his regularly drinking 'more than ordinary', though in another, probably merely relaying the latest gossip from London, he attributes it to 'the French pox and other distempers'. In an unexpected inversion of national stereotypes, the Italian virtuoso Nicola Matteis apparently needed to be persuaded to take himself less seriously: if Roger North's account of the kindly intervention of Sir Roger L'Estrange and others is true, and if personal character is reflected in music, he seems to have taken the advice to heart in his three-violin Ground in D minor, with its quirky asymmetrical common-time ground and the folksong-like character both of its opening melody and the recurrent harmony which shifts to the relative major on the third chord of each variation. If any seek an antidote to melancholy, here it is. One source containing the bass part only, *US-NH* Osborn Music MS 515, gives the heading 'a.4.', acknowledging the increasingly important melodic role the bass takes on as the work progresses, though it is highly likely that some of the long upper-part rests in the exchanges between violins and bass would have been filled by a barrage of un-notated plucked string chords from the continuo group.

For all or part of their lives in England, the three Continental composers represented in this volume pursued successful careers without court patronage, indicating that their contribution to wider musical life was valued. For Baltzar, no Whitehall appointment was available until the Restoration, and though Matteis reportedly performed at court, he was never on the permanent payroll; Gottfried Finger enjoyed a brief period of court employment during the reign

<sup>1</sup> P. Holman, 'Thomas Baltzar (?1631-1663), The 'Incomparable *Lubicer* on the Violin', *Cheyls* 13 (1984), 3-38, at pp. 19-20; idem, *Four and Twenty Fiddlers: the Violin at the English Court 1540-1690* (Oxford, 1993), 277.

<sup>2</sup> A. Clark, ed., *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood, Antiquary, of Oxford, 1632-1695, Described by Himself*, i (Oxford, 1891), 256-7.

of James II when, according to the dedication of his Op.1 *Sonatae, XII, Pro Diversis Instrumentis* (1688), his works were played in the Catholic Chapel Royal, but remained in England as a freelance musician for several years after James's deposition. The first three of his sonatas in this volume are Nos 7-9 of Op. 1, the rest of that work, as its title indicates, being for different instrumental combinations. Attractive and accessible, the three-violin sonatas broadly follow the Italianate 'da chiesa' pattern with four alternating slow and fast movements, though not always in the same order: Op. 1/7 adds a brief adagio coda and the third movement of Op.1/9 consists of brief alternating allegro and adagio passages. Two further Finger sonatas conclude the main content of the volume, the first having a first violin part for violin piccolo, tuned a minor third above the standard g-d'-a'-e'' and notated a corresponding distance below its sounding pitch. Otherwise, this sonata follows the conventional four-movement pattern; the last, in contrast, is more fragmented and treats the violins in a different way, for much of its length punctuating long solo passages for each instrument with brief ensembles. The Appendix gives the single surviving part of another Finger sonata, again in the orthodox four-section form.

This is clearly a very good edition in which, in the case of the Jenkins suites, the editors have had to cope with incomplete and sometimes inaccurate source material copied some years after the music was written; it provides an accurate and scholarly text of a hitherto obscure repertory, all interesting and some extremely beautiful, and comprehensively demonstrates the important musical relationship between England and north and central Europe which prevailed from the Commonwealth period until the end of the seventeenth century. In relation to the edition's evident achievements, criticisms are minor and often a matter of opinion rather than objective fact. The explanation offered on p. xxiv of the term 'brouch', used by Edward Lowe at the start of the duple-time codas of the galliards in Baltzar's two-violin suites, should now be laid to rest;<sup>3</sup> rather than a derivative of 'brooch', meaning a decorative addition or pendant, the term probably originates in the German 'Bruch' (break) and signifies an interruption to the preceding metre and tempo. It was probably the German Baltzar himself who introduced the word to England; Lowe omitted it in his later manuscripts, which include the three-violin Baltzar suite, but the apparently English copyist of Gabriel Roberts' set *GB-Lbl*, Add. 31431 (1680) gives the anglicized equivalent 'Breach' before the coda of the fourth suite of Locke's 'Consort for Several Friends'. More seriously, though now unequivocally in the realm of opinion, the introduction could perhaps have

<sup>3</sup> Proposed in Clare Grill Rayner, 'A Little-Known Seventeenth-Century Composer, Christopher Gibbons (1615-1676)', Ph.D dissertation (Indiana University, 1963), i. 187-90. Gibbons himself apparently used the term only twice, in his autograph manuscript *Ob*, MS Mus. Sch. C.53, where he spelt it in one instance 'Brotch' and in the other 'Brocth'.

offered more detail in some areas without exceeding its proper bounds. On some topics, such as the probable date of Baltzar's three-violin suite, it is more tentative than Holman's earlier work on the subject without giving any particular reason why greater caution might have become necessary. 'Broken Consort', as the name of the court ensemble, could mean that plucked string and plucked keyboard instruments had a more prominent role in at least the earlier music in this repertory than its appearance in score suggests, and there might have been a place for wider, albeit necessarily speculative, discussion of continuo realization; the existence of multiple bass and continuo parts in Oxford sources, including those of the two-violin suites of Baltzar, is noted, but nothing is said about the ways performers might have interpreted bass lines in the context of specific works. The editors' perceptive discussion of the ancestry of mid-baroque continuo-based ensemble music, relating two- and three-violin and bass combinations to double- and triple-choir polychoral music, underlines the potential significance of antiphonal dialogue in this music and at least opens up the possibility of emphasizing such dialogue through contrasting timbres in chordal support, but the performing material available from Stainer and Bell requires the continuo to be played from the main volume and thus implies a probably unintended preference for keyboard realization by a single player. None of these criticisms, however, diminishes the quality of the edition itself: it is greatly to the editors' credit that their work not only raises so many questions but also offers the means of putting different possibilities to the test.

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## NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

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Bettina Hoffmann is the author of *La viola da gamba*, a comprehensive history of the viol (L'Epos, 2010; German edition: Ortus, 2014; English edition: Routledge, 2018) and the *Catalog of solo and chamber music for viola da gamba* (LIM, 2001). She has also edited critical facsimile editions of the *Regulae Concentuum Partiturae* of Georg Muffat and of works for viol and for cello by Antonio Vivaldi and Domenico Gabrieli (Bärenreiter-Verlag, S.P.E.S.). Articles by her appear in many learned periodicals. Recently she discovered and edited the only German treatise on the viol currently known to us, *Instruction oder eine anweisung auff der Violadigamba*. She is currently working on a volume about the 'cello, double bass and viol in the works of Antonio Vivaldi for the Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi, to be published by Olschki. She is professor of viola da gamba, baroque cello, performing praxis and baroque chamber music at the Conservatorio «Arrigo Pedrollo» di Vicenza and the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole.

RICHARD CARTER grew up in a musical family, playing the 'cello, but was dissuaded from studying music and took a degree in Physics at New College, Oxford, subsequently spending twenty years living and working on the English canals. Increasing interest in early music and historical performance led him to taking up the viol and baroque 'cello, with encouragement and guidance from Stewart McCoy, Alison Crum and Catherine Finnis. Since moving to Austria in 2002 he has devoted himself to early music, supporting and joining in the teaching and performing activities of his wife Johanna, and running a small publishing venture, Oriana Music, with a special emphasis on lyra viol and viol music for beginners. He is a founder member of the Vienna-based viol consort Almayne, and a former editor of this Journal (2009)

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ROBERT THOMPSON retired from teaching at Colfe's School, Lee, London at the end of 2014. He has written a number of articles on seventeenth-century musical topics and co-authored *Purcell Manuscripts: the Principal Musical Sources* (Cambridge, 2000) with Robert Shay. His new edition of Purcell's later continuo anthems appeared in 2011 as *Purcell Society* vol. 29; he is currently working on its companion vol. 28 and, with Andrew Walkling, on a revised *Music Britannica* edition of Matthew Locke and Christopher Gibbons's *Cupid and Death*.