

Giovanni Domenico da Nola (ca. 1510/20-1592) was born in the actual township of Nola, a suburb of Naples. A composer and a poet, he authored Italian *madrigales*, sacred compositions, and *canzone villanesche*, for which he was widely revered. His *canzone* were published in two collections by Hieronymus Scotto in Venice in 1541, were taken as models and were even paraphrased by composers such as Willaert, Lassus, Donato, Waelrant, and Scandello. Nola also published at least four books of madrigals in 4, 5, and 6 voices starting in 1545, in addition to collections of his liturgical *motetes*, the last one dating from 1575. He served as *Maestro di capella* of the Church of the Annunciation in Naples from 1563 until his death in 1592.

Nola's *villanesche* are written in three voices and are based on simple texts (probably of his own authorship) that in many cases find their origin in the *canti carnascialeschi*. Texts in these *canti* often make reference to people considered as marginal at that time (prostitutes, gypsies, thieves, swindlers, disabled individuals, and even Jews), and frequently have underlying meaning, many times with sexual nuances or connotations. Carnival was a time of deceiving. It was common for people of different social classes to mix using elaborate costumes and masks, pretending to be somebody totally opposed to who they really were, mainly in festivities and parades, very popular particularly in Naples and Florence. Another recurring theme in *villanesche* texts is that of the unrequited love.

Nola's works show mostly simple homophonous writing, occasionally alternating with light imitative passages, perhaps underlying the rustic character of the texts. Deliberate use of parallel fifths (something strictly prohibited in the countrepunt of the time) can be found precisely in those homophonic passages.

In the transcriptions presented here, I have decided to include barlines (not present in the original scores) in the hopes to only facilitate the modern performer with correct phrasing for each voice-part. Passages with rhythmic structure 3-2 or 3-3-2 must not be considered as syncopated but rather always respecting the natural accentuation of the words. A good example is the initial phrase of *Medici nui siamo*.

Regarding the arrangements made by other composers, on a general basis we could say that they :

- Extended the original voicing from 3 to 4
- Kept the original formal structure AABCC
- “Corrected” the parallel fifths

Willaert, the first of them, kept Nola’s top part almost identical but granting it to his Tenor line (*Cingari simo, Madonna io non lo so, O Dio se vede chiaro y O dolce vita mia*) and enriched the work’s harmony and imitation passages

Lassus, simply quoted the beginning of Nola’s top part in his Tenor line, and then continued freely with his own musical ideas (*Ad altre lo voi dar, Ecco la nimph’Ebraica y O belle fusa*)

Donato, in *Chi la gagliarda* keeps Nola’s top line almost without changes, expanding slightly the harmony