

82 Giovanni Maria Artusi

Music theorists of the Renaissance traditionally wrote about the physics of sound, tuning, and musical composition in terms of pitch relations and drew upon examples of sacred polyphonic music for illustration. But at the end of the sixteenth century, new musical practices that were flourishing in polyphonic as well as in solo genres had gone beyond the foundations established by the Renaissance contrapuntists. In a set of dialogues published in 1600, Giovanni Maria Artusi (1546–1613), an Augustinian monk, attempted to point out the imperfections in the modern music he was hearing. The responses from the defenders of modern music forced him to issue a second part to his treatise, which he published in 1603. Artusi may also have been the “Antonio Braccino da Todi” who wrote two further critiques of the moderns. The first of these is lost; the second, published in 1608, addresses Giulio Cesare Monteverdi’s defense of his brother Claudio’s music (see No. 3 below) in response to Artusi’s scrutiny in 1600 of Claudio’s modernist “errors” in the five-voice madrigal “Cruda Amarilli.”

In this part of the dialogue, the speaker Luca understands certain free, modern dissonances as examples of the kind of expressive graces that singers or instrumentalists often improvised in performance. The conservative Vario examines the voice leading in Monteverdi’s madrigal and argues that no amount of looking for such musical figures as *accenti* or *portar la voce* can reveal any underlying contrapuntal structure that is regular and in conformance with good harmonic ratios. He accuses the moderns of relying on the ear alone, which, without intellect, may be fooled in its judgment. Although this is but one aspect of his extensive arguments, and though Luca’s observations were written by Artusi, the examination of “Cruda Amarilli” reveals the profound difference in how the old and new practices regarded the nature of the musical object. In Artusi’s view, much of modern music was defective, irrespective of its aims.

FROM *Artusi, or, Of the Imperfections of Modern Music*

(1600)

SECOND DISCOURSE

LUCA: Yesterday, sir, after I had left Your Lordship and was going toward the piazza, I was invited by some gentlemen to hear certain new madrigals.

TEXT: *L’Artusi ovvero Delle imperfettioni della moderna musica* (Venice, 1600; facs. Bologna, 1968), fols. 39–44. Translation by Oliver Strunk, revised by Margaret Murata.

Delighted by the amiability of my friends and by the newness of the compositions, I accompanied them to the house of Signor Antonio Goretti, a nobleman of Ferrara, a young virtuoso and as great a lover of musicians as any man I have ever known. I found there Signor Luzzasco and Signor Hippolito Fiorini,¹ distinguished men, with whom had assembled many noble spirits, versed in music. The madrigals were sung and repeated, but without giving the name of the author. The texture (*tessitura*) was not unpleasing, even if, as Your Lordship will see, it introduces new rules, new modes, and new turns of phrase. These were, however, harsh and little pleasing to the ear, nor could they be otherwise; for so long as they violate the good rules—in part founded upon experience, the mother of all things, in part observed in nature, and in part proved by demonstration—we must believe them deformations of the nature and propriety of true harmony, far removed from the musician’s goal, which, as Your Lordship said yesterday, is delectation.

But, in order that you may see the whole question and give me your opinion, here are the passages, scattered here and there through the above-mentioned madrigals, which I wrote out yesterday evening for my amusement.²

VARIO: Signor Luca, you bring me new things which astonish me not a little. It pleases me, at my age, to see a new method of composing, though it would please me much more if I saw that these passages were founded upon some reason which could satisfy the intellect. But as castles in the air, chimeras founded upon sand, these novelties do not please me; they deserve blame, not praise. Let us see the passages, however.³

The musical score consists of five staves representing different voices: Canto (soprano), Alto, Quinto (contratenor), Tenore (tenor), and Basso (bass). The score is in common time and uses a soprano clef for the Canto and Alto, a soprano clef for the Quinto, a tenor clef for the Tenore, and a bass clef for the Basso. Measure 13 (labeled '1 [m. 13]') shows mostly rests or single notes. Measure 19 (labeled '2 [m. 19]') shows more complex patterns, with the Quinto and Tenore voices having more sustained notes and eighth-note patterns. The Basso staff has a single note in measure 19.

1. Goretti, Luzzaschi and Fiorini were, of course, real persons, prominent in the musical life of Ferrara. Luzzaschi, in particular, is cited by Monteverdi as one of those who “renewed” the “Second Practice.” See No. 83 below, p. 540.

2. Luca put separate parts into score.

3. These musical examples are from “Cruda Amarilli,” later published in 1603 in Claudio Monteverdi’s *Fifth Book of Madrigals a 5*. Artusi’s excerpts differ in a few minor points from the published version.

The musical score consists of two staves of music. The top staff begins at measure 3 [m. 21] and ends at measure 5 [m. 37]. The bottom staff begins at measure 6 [m. 41] and ends at measure 7 [m. 53]. The music is written in common time, featuring multiple voices with different note heads and stems.

LUCA: Indeed, in the light of what little experience I have in this art, these things do not seem to me to be things with which their authors or inventors could or should construct even a four-story house, as they say, seeing that they are contrary to what is well and good in the institution of harmony. They are harsh to the ear, rather offending than delighting it; and to the good rules left by those who have established the order and the bounds of this science, they bring confusion and imperfection of no little consequence. Instead of enriching, augmenting, and ennobling harmony by various means, as so many noble spirits have done, they bring it to such estate that the beautiful and purified style is indistinguishable from the barbaric. And all the while they continue to excuse these things by various arguments in conformity with the style.

VARIO: You say well. But how can they excuse and defend these imperfections, which could not possibly be more absurd?

LUCA: Absurd? I do not know how you can defend that opinion of yours. They call absurd the things composed in another style and would have it that this is the true method of composition, declaring that this novelty and new order of composing is about to produce many effects which ordinary music, full of so many and such sweet harmonies, cannot and never will produce. And they will have it that the sense, hearing such asperities, will be moved and will do marvelous things.

VARIO: Are you in earnest or are you mocking me?

LUCA: Am I in earnest? It is rather they who mock those who hold otherwise.

VARIO: Since I see that you are not joking, I will tell you what I think, but take note that I shall not be so ready to yield to their opinion. And, for the first argument against them, I tell you that the high is a part of the low and arises from the low and, being a part of it, must continue to be related to it, as to its beginning or as the cloud to the spring from which it is derived. That this is true, the experiment of the monochord will show you. For if two strings of equal length and thickness are stretched over one and the same equal space and tuned perfectly in unison (which is regarded by the musician as a single sound, just as two surfaces which are throughout in contact with each other are regarded by Vitello⁴ as a single surface), and if you cut off a part from one of these or bring out a high sound from it by placing a bridge under it, I say that beyond doubt the high will be a part of the low. And if you would know that a part produces the high sound, strike the whole and then the part which is high with respect to the whole, and it will necessarily be related to the low, as the part to the whole or as to its beginning. At the lowest note of the complete system, or of any composition, there may be represented an eye, sending forth various visible rays and regarding all the parts, observing in what proportion they correspond to their beginning and foundation. How then will the first, second, fourth, fifth and the other examples stand, if the higher part has no correspondence or harmonic proportion to the lower?

LUCA: They claim that they do observe harmonic relation, saying that the semiminim [A] in the first example, which is taken after the rest of the same value and which forms a sixteenth⁵ with the lower part, would already be dissonant if the cantus were to sing as follows:



for then the tenor, singing the first semiminim an octave lower, would cause the second one, which forms the dissonance, to be heard with it above. Aside from this, they say, since the third of the four semiminims is consonant, what difference can it make if we cause a little more harshness to be heard by con-

4. Erasmus Vitello (Erazm Ciolek), Polish mathematician of the thirteenth century.

5. A major ninth.

verting two semiminims, one consonant, the other dissonant, into one minim wholly dissonant,⁶ this is as though we were to sing four semiminims, alternately consonant and dissonant, following the rule for such figures. In this way they make all that they do more gross.

VARIO: Good! I follow you perfectly, and answer that the sense of hearing does not perceive what it does not hear and, not perceiving it, cannot present it to the intellect, there being nothing in the intellect that has not first been perceived by the senses. How absurd it is to say that the tenor sustains a note in one register while the soprano, immediately afterward in a higher register, produces the effect the tenor should have produced! Especially after the rest, how much more evident it is to the ear that the soprano sings a sixteenth and then a fourteenth!⁷ It is one thing that the ear should hear a dissonance in one part after a rest, another that, when several semiminims are successively taken by step, one after another, one is perceived to be consonant, another dissonant; one thing to hear two semiminims taken by step in the natural way, another to hear a minim, and that taken by leap, in place of the dissonant semiminim. This last offends the ear; the others do not, for the movement is by step.

LUCA: Well said. But they say that all this is called grace and is accented singing.⁸

VARIO: I do not remember having read in any author—and countless excellent ones have written of music—that there is such a thing as accented music. I shall welcome it if you will tell me what it is, according to the pretension of these modern composers.

LUCA: They say that the accents in compositions have a remarkable effect and that these accents occur only when a part ascends to a high note; for example, that when four notes ascend by step, the accent is made on the last note and not on the others, the voice beginning a third lower than the note on which the accent is to be produced and being carried gracefully to its level. But to produce good accord always, this demands the greatest discretion and judgment in the singer for its execution. Here is an example:⁹

The image shows four musical staves labeled [a] through [d]. Each staff consists of two five-line staves. Staff [a] shows a single note on each staff. Staff [b] shows a note on the top staff followed by a note on the bottom staff. Staff [c] shows a note on the top staff followed by a note on the bottom staff, with a vertical bar line between them. Staff [d] shows a note on the top staff followed by a note on the bottom staff, with a vertical bar line between them, and a small bracket under the note on the bottom staff.

6. F against G.

7. Sings a ninth and then a seventh.

8. For a discussion of this musical example in terms of the ornaments called *accenti*, see Claude V. Palisca, "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy," in *The New Monteverdi Companion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), pp. 130–32. See also the Glossary of Foreign Performance Terms, p. 731.

9. In Artusi's illustration of the *accento*, the ornament appears to "rob" time from the duration of the note to be accented, that is, it is "on the beat." In early seventeenth-century illustrations,



VARIO: I will tell you two things. First, that these words do not explain in clear terms the nature, the peculiarity, and the essence of this manner of accented singing, but seem to be a circumlocution calculated to show, not that they are disposed to regulate all things with rules founded on truth, but rather that they wish to confuse them. We must define what this accent is; then, we shall see whether the parts of our definition are mutually in accord, a thing which I do not know that any serious author has so far done. Second, this manner of singing that you call accented does not assume that the composers will employ barbarisms such as are seen in the examples you show me. It requires that the composers produce good accord (a point which you must note well and above all else) and that the singer use great discretion and judgment in "carrying the voice" (*nel portar la voce*) on such occasions.¹⁰

And if you tell me that the effect which the tenor produces in the seventh example tends to demonstrate this manner of accented singing, I will reply that since it does not make a good chord and therefore the singer does not know where he can "carry the voice" according to the opinion and will of the moderns, there must of necessity be an error in grammar. It would be better if, when they mean that the singer should, with judgment and discretion, "carry the voice," they were to introduce at that point some sign indicating their wish, in order that, perceiving the need, he might produce better accord and more pleasing harmony than he produces by singing along at his own will.

LUCA: Such an indication would not be unprofitable if one could reasonably discover a universal sign to indicate this manner of "carrying the voice" to the singer. But while these new inventors are exhausting themselves in new inventions to make this manifest, they go on scattering these passages through their compositions, which, when sung or sounded on different instruments by musicians accustomed to this kind of accented music, full of "suppositions,"¹¹ yield a not unpleasing harmony at which I marvel.

the *portar la voce* (see note 10 and the Glossary, p. 733) is also noted as a subdivision of the previous tone, that is, sounding "before the beat." The two effects are different but could be difficult to distinguish, depending on the tempo. Luca's fourth example [d] differs from his others, in that the new *accento* begins on the tone E, a step lower than the previous tone.

10. *Portar la voce*, literally "to carry the voice," is the name of the embellishment, which in other Italian treatises also involves rising pitches and unequal subdivision of a lower tone. Compare the French *port de voix*, and the example above. The Italian term does not seem to have entered the common vocabulary; it is not to be confused with the modern *portamento*. See the Glossary, p. 733.

11. *Suppositi* in Artusi refer to substitute notes. Compare Artusi, pt. 2 (1603), pp. 45–47: "But how many melodies have been written using sharps, flats, *fiori*, *fioretti*, *accenti*, and *suppositi*, and things against nature?" He rails against unnatural accidentals, intervals of sevenths in place

VARIO: This may result from two things. First, that the singers do not sing what is written, but go ahead "carrying the voice" and sustaining it in such a way that, when they perceive that it is about to produce some bad effect, they divert it elsewhere, taking it somewhere where it seems it will not offend the ear. The second thing is, that sensuous excess corrupts the sense, meaning simply that the ear is so taken up with the other parts that it does not fully perceive the offense committed against it (as it would if the composition were for two, three, or four voices), while reason, which knows and distinguishes the good from the bad, perceives right well that a deception is wrought on the sense, which receives the material only in a certain confused way, even though it borders on truth. This manifestly is clearly seen when the organist adds to his other registers that of the twelfth; here it is reason and not the ear that discovers the many dissonances which occur among them.

LUCA: It is known that the ear is deceived, and to this these composers, or new inventors, apply themselves with enthusiasm. They seek only to satisfy the ear and with this aim toil night and day at their instruments to hear the effect which passages so made produce. The poor fellows do not perceive that what the instruments tell them is false and that it is one thing to search with voices and instruments for something pertaining to the harmonic faculty, another to arrive at the true and the exact by means of reason, seconded by the ear.

... But tell me if this science can be advanced by new modes of expression. Why is it that you are unwilling to augment it, or that augmenting it displeases you or does not seem good to you? The field is large; everyone is occupied with new things. Musicians too should expand their art, for making all compositions after one fashion sickens and disgusts the ear.

VARIO: I do not deny that discovering new things is not merely good but necessary. But tell me first why you wish to employ these dissonances as they employ them? If you do it in order to say, "I wish them to be plainly heard, but so that the ear may not be offended," why do you not use them in the ordinary way, conformable to reason, in accordance with what Adriano and Cipriano, Palestrina, Porta, Claudio, Gabrieli, Gastoldi, Nanino, Giovanelli,¹² and so many others in this academy have written? Have they perhaps failed to cause asperities to be heard? Look at Orlando Lasso, Filippo di Monte, Giaches Wert, and you will find full heaps of them. If you do not wish the ear to be so much offended by them, you will find the manner and order of their use in the same authors. Now, even if you wish dissonance to become consonant, it

remains necessary that it be contrary to consonance; by nature it is always dissonant and can hence become consonant only when consonance becomes dissonant. This brings us to impossibilities, although these new composers may perhaps so exert themselves that, in the course of time, they will discover a new method by which dissonance will become consonance, and consonance dissonance. And it is no great matter for lofty intelligences like these to be doing and inventing things of this kind exclusively.

LUCA: Their aim is precisely to temper to some degree the harshness of dissonance in another way than that used by their predecessors, and to this they devote their efforts.

VARIO: If the purpose can be attained by observing the precepts and good rules handed down by the theorists and followed by all the experts, what reason is there to go beyond the bounds to seek out new extravagances? Do you not know that all the arts and sciences have been brought under rules by scholars of the past and that the first elements, rules, and precepts on which they are founded have been handed down to us in order that, so long as there is no deviation from them, one person shall be able to understand what another says or does? And just as, to avoid confusion in the arts and sciences, it is not permitted to every schoolmaster to change the rules bequeathed by Guarino,¹³ nor to every poet to put a long syllable in verse in place of a short one, nor to every arithmetician to corrupt the processes and proofs which are proper to that art, so it is not permitted to everyone who strings notes together to deprave and corrupt music, introducing new modes of composing with new principles founded on sand. Horace says:

Est modus in rebus, sunt certi denique fines
Quos ultra citraque nequit consistere rectum.¹⁴

LUCA: The truth is that all the arts and sciences have been brought under rules. But still, since dissonances are employed in harmonies as nonessentials, it seems that musicians are entitled to use them as they like....

These musicians observe the rule that the part forming the dissonance with the lowest part has a harmonic correspondence with the tenor, so that it accords with every other part, while the lowest part also accords with every other part. Thus they make a mixture of their own.

VARIO: I see that this rule of theirs is observed in the first, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh examples. But in the sixth example, the eighth notes (*crome*) have no harmonic relation, either with the bass or with the tenor. With what sort of rule do you think they can save themselves?

LUCA: I do not know how they can help themselves here. I see the observance of no rule, although I believe that the eightths are the result of perceiving,

¹³ The grammatical *Regulae* of the humanist Guarino Veronese (1374–1460), a resident of Ferrara after 1429.

¹⁴ "There is a measure in all things. There are, in short, fixed bounds, beyond and short of which right can find no place," *Satires* 1.1. 106–7 (trans. Fairclough).

of octaves, and certain harmonic relations that arise from figures created by *inganni*, that is, groups of tones that do not have the same pitch intervals but represent the same solmisation syllables. What he considers "true" as opposed to "false" *suppositi* appear to be substitutions that come under the practice of *musica ficta* (though he does not use the term), octave substitutions, and perhaps more diatonic forms of *inganni*.

¹² Adrian Willaert, Cipriano de Rore, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, Costanzo Porta, Claudio Merulo, Giovanni or Andrea Gabrieli, Giovanni Gastoldi, Giovanni Maria or Giovanni Bernardino Nanino, Ruggiero Giovanelli.

with instruments, that they do not greatly offend the ear because of their rapid movement.

VARIO: Are you not reminded of what Aristoxenus says of such men as these? Yesterday I gave you the substance of this thought; now I shall give you his very words. In the second book of his *Harmonics* he says: "It is therefore a very great and altogether disgraceful sin to refer the nature of a harmonic question to an instrument."¹⁵ As regards the point that, because of their rapid movement they do not offend the ear, the intellect, recognizing the deception wrought upon the sense, declares that since these intervals are not consonant, but dissonant and placed at random, they can in no way be in a harmonic relation; that they can therefore cause no harmony pleasing to the ear; and that their rapidity, accompanied by so many parts making noise together, is nothing else than the sensuous excess which corrupts the sense.

LUCA: They think only of satisfying the sense, caring little that reason should enter here to judge their compositions.

VARIO: If such as these had read the ninth chapter of the first book of Boethius, and the first chapter of his fifth book,¹⁶ and the first chapter of the first book of Ptolemy,¹⁷ they would beyond doubt be of a different mind. . . . Through ignorance a man is unable to distinguish which activities are better and which worse, and as a result of this inability he commonly embraces many things from which he should flee and flees from many which he should follow and embrace. Of ignorance, then, are born compositions of this sort, which, like monstrosities, pass through the hands of this man and that, and these men do not know themselves what the real nature of these compositions is. For them it is enough to create a tumult of sounds, a confusion of absurdities, an assemblage of imperfections; and all springs from that ignorance with which they are beclouded. . . . Our ancients never taught that sevenths may be used absolutely and openly, as you see them used in the second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh examples, for they do not give grace to the composition and, as I said a little while ago, the high part has no correspondence to its whole, beginning, or foundation.

LUCA: This is a new paradox.

VARIO: If this new paradox were reasonably founded on some reason, it would deserve much praise and would move onward to eternal life. But it is destined to have a short life, for demonstration can only show that truth is against it.

15. See Oliver Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History* (New York: Norton, 1950), p. 31. Artusi quotes Aristoxenus in the Latin translation of Antonio Gogava (Venice, 1562), much decried by sixteenth-century scholars of Greek.

16. From his *Fundamentals of Music* (1.9), "Not every judgment is to be pronounced by the senses, but reason is rather to be believed: wherein of the fallibility of the senses" and (5.1), "Of the nature of harmony, and what the means of judging it are, and whether the senses are always to be believed."

17. Claudius Ptolemaeus, *Of Harmonies*, chap. 1, "Of harmonic criteria."

83 Claudio and Giulio Cesare Monteverdi

By 1605 Claudio Monteverdi had served as musician to the Duke of Mantua for some fifteen years and had published sacred music, a volume of canzonets, and four books of polyphonic madrigals. In his fifth book of madrigals (1605), the first of his publications to indicate a *basso continuo*, he acknowledged Giovanni Maria Artusi's criticisms of his music with a brief announcement that he would produce a written explanation of the modern, or "second," practice. No such explanation was ever published and none is known to exist. But Giulio Cesare Monteverdi published a defense of his brother Claudio's new style in the form of an "explanation" of the 1605 announcement, which he issued in Claudio's *Scherzi musicali* of 1607. Giulio Cesare repeatedly takes great pains to demonstrate that recognized authorities such as Giuseppe Zarlino allowed for the existence of music composed in manners other than those treated in learned writings and that other sixteenth-century composers recognized as great had already anticipated many aspects of Claudio's madrigals that Artusi deemed faults. The Artusi-Monteverdi controversy centered on the combining of polyphonic lines. The key distinction that is often quoted from Monteverdi's defense is that harmony is said to control the contrapuntal lines in the older, "first" practice but obeys the words in the second practice. This did not mean, however, that in 1607, harmony should be subordinate to a single, dominating vocal line. Giulio Cesare adopted Plato's threefold definition of *melodia* as harmonic relation, rhythm, and text; that is, *melodia* signifies the totality of a composition (as it did for ancient music). He argues that these three components of music stand in different relationships to each other in different musical styles. The brothers also challenge Artusi to justify his opinions—not with words but with musical compositions of his own. Their challenge illustrates the esthetic belief of Baroque artists that the senses have a role in judging art, as Claudio himself wrote in 1605.

Giulio Cesare presented his defense in the form of annotations to Claudio's letter, which is reproduced first below.

Explanation of the Letter Printed in the Fifth Book of Madrigals

CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI'S LETTER
(1605)

Studio Readers,

Be not surprised that I am giving these madrigals to the press without first replying to the objections that Artusi made against some very minute portions of them. Being in the service of this Most Serene Highness of Mantua, I am not master of the time I would require. Nevertheless I wrote a reply to let it be known that I do not do things by chance, and as soon as it is rewritten it will see the light under the title *The Second Practice, or, the Perfection of Modern Music*. Some will wonder at this, not believing that there is any practice other than that taught by Zarlino. But let them be assured concerning consonances and dissonances that there is a different way of considering them from that already determined, one that defends the modern manner of composition with the assent of reason and of the senses. I wanted to say this both so that the expression "second practice" would not be appropriated by others and so that men of intellect might meanwhile consider other second thoughts concerning harmony. And have faith that the modern composer builds on foundations of truth.

Live happily.

GIULIO CESARE MONTEVERDI'S EXPLANATION
OF THE LETTER
(1607)

Some months ago a letter of my brother Claudio Monteverdi was printed and given to the public. A certain person, under the fictitious name of Antonio Braccini da Todi,¹ has been at pains to make this seem to the world a chimera

TEXT: Claudio Monteverdi, *Il quinto libro de madrigali a cinque voci* (Venice, 1605), "Studio lettori," translated by Claude V. Palisca, "The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy" in *The New Monteverdi Companion*, ed. Denis Arnold and Nigel Fortune (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), pp. 151–52, reprinted by permission; and Giulio Cesare Monteverdi, "Dichiaratione della lettera stampata nel quinto libro de' suoi madregali" in *Scherzi musicali a tre voci di Claudio Monteverde*, ed. Giulio Cesare Monteverdi (Venice, 1607), translation by Oliver Strunk. The Italian texts are available in Domenico de' Paoli, *Claudio Monteverdi: Lettere, dediche e prefazioni* (Rome, 1973), pp. 391–92 and 394–407. Giulio Cesare's annotations were originally interlined with Claudio's text, as they are below.

1. A first text by "Braccino" is unknown and may not have been published. Its author replied to Giulio Cesare Monteverdi in Antonio Braccino, *Discorso secondo musicale per la dichiaratione*

and a vanity. For this reason, impelled by the love I bear my brother and still more by the truth contained in his letter, and seeing that he pays attention to deeds and takes little notice of the words of others, and being unable to endure that his works should be so unjustly censured, I have determined to reply to the objections raised against them, declaring point for point in fuller detail what my brother, in his letter, compressed into little space, to the end that this person and whoever follows him may learn that the truth that it contains is very different from what he represents in his discussions. The letter says:

Be not surprised that I am giving these madrigals to the press without first replying to the objections that Artusi made

By "Artusi" is to be understood the book bearing the title, *L'Artusi, or, Of the Imperfections of Modern Music*, whose author, disregarding the civil precept of Horace, *Nec tua laudabis studia, haud aliena reprehendes*² and without any cause given to him, and therefore unjustly, says the worst he can of certain musical compositions of my brother Claudio.

against some very minute portions of them.

These portions, called "passages" by Artusi, which are seen so lacerated by the said Artusi in his Second Discourse, are part of my brother's madrigal "Cruda Amarilli," and their harmony is part of the melody of which it is composed; for this reason, in respect of everything that constitutes "melody," he [Claudio] has called them portions and not "passages."

Being in the service of this Most Serene Highness of Mantua, I am not master of the time I would require.

This my brother said not only because of his responsibility for both church and chamber music, but also because of other extraordinary services; for, serving a great prince, he finds the greater part of his time taken up, now with tourneys, now with ballets, now with comedies and various concerts, and lastly in an ensemble of two *viole bastarde*, which responsibility and study are perhaps not so usual, as his adversary could have understood. And my brother has bided his time and continues to bide his time, not only for the reason and valid excuse set forth, but also because he knows that *properante omnia perverse agunt* [the hasty do all things badly], that excellence and speed are not companions in any undertaking whatsoever, and that perfect excellence requires the whole man, the more so in attempting to treat of a matter hardly touched upon by intelligent harmonic theorists, and not, like his opponent, of a matter *nota lippis atque tonsoribus* [familiar to the blear-eyed and to barbers].

Nevertheless I wrote a reply to let it be known that I do not do things by chance,

della lettera posta ne' Scherzi Musicali del Sig. Claudio Monteverdi (Venice, 1608; facs., Milan, 1924). It has been suggested that Braccino is Artusi himself.

2. Epistles, 1.18.39: "Praise not your own studies; blame not those of others."

My brother says that he does not compose his works by chance because, in this kind of music, it has been his intention to make the words the mistress of the harmony and not the servant, and because it is in this manner that his work is to be judged in the composition of the "melody." Of this Plato speaks *meli-diam ex tribus constare oratione, harmonia, rithmo* [The "melody" is composed of three things: the words, the harmony, and the rhythm], and, a little further on, *Quin etiam consonum ipsum et dissonum eodem modo, quando-quidem rithmus et harmonia orationem sequitur non ipsa oratio rithmum et harmoniam sequitur.* [And so of the apt and the unapt, if the rhythm and the harmony follow the words, and not the words these.]³ Then, to give greater force to the words, he continues *quid vero loquendi modus ipsaque oratio non ne animi affectionem sequitur?* [Do not the manner of the diction and the words follow and conform to the disposition of the soul?] and then *orationen [sic] vero cetera quoq[ue] sequuntur* [indeed, all the rest follows and conforms to the words].

But in this case, Artusi takes certain portions, or, as he calls them, "passages," from my brother's madrigal "Cruda Amarilli," paying no attention to the words, but neglecting them as though they had nothing to do with the music, later showing the said "passages" deprived of their words, of all their harmony, and of their rhythm. But if, in the "passages" noted by him as false, he had shown the words that went with them, then the world would have known without fail where his judgment had gone astray, and he would not have said that they were chimeras and castles in the air for not entirely following the rules of the First Practice. But it would truly have been a beautiful demonstration if he had also done the same with Cipriano's madrigals "Dalle belle contrade," "Se ben il duol," "Et se pur mi mantieni, Amor," "Poiche m'invita amore," "Crudel acerba," "Un' altra volta,"⁴ and, to conclude, with others whose harmony obeys their words exactly and which would indeed be left bodies without soul if they were left without this most important and principal part of music. By passing judgment on these "passages" without the words, his opponent implies that all excellence and beauty consist in the exact observance of the aforesaid rules of the First Practice, which make the harmony mistress of the words. This my brother will make apparent, knowing for certain that in a kind of composition such as this one of his, music turns on the perfection of the "melody," considered from which point of view the harmony, from being the mistress becomes the servant of the words, and the words the mistress of the harmony. This is the way of thinking to which the Second Practice, or modern usage, tends. On such a true basis, he promises to show, in refutation of his opponent, that the harmony of the madrigal "Cruda Amarilli" is not composed by chance, but with beautiful art and excellent study that is not understood by his adversary and unknown to him.

3. *Republic* 398d. Monteverdi quotes Plato in the Latin translation of Marsilio Ficino.

4. Madrigals from Rore's *Fifth Book of Madrigals a 5* (1566), *Fourth Book a 5* (1557), *Le vive fiamme* (1565), and *Second Book a 4* (1557).

And since my brother promises, in refutation of his opponent, to show in writing that with respect to the perfection of the "melody" the writings of his adversary are not based upon the truth of art, let his opponent, in refutation of my brother's madrigal, show the errors of others through the medium of the press with a comparable practical performance—with harmony observing the rules of the First Practice, that is, disregarding the perfection of the melody; considered from which point of view the harmony, from being servant, becomes mistress. For *purpura juxta purpuram dijudicanda* [purple ought to be judged with purple]. Using only words to oppose the deeds of another *nil agit exemplum item quod lite resolut* [offers the example that settling one dispute by another accomplishes nothing].⁵

Then let him allow the world to be the judge, and if he brings forward no deeds, but only words, deeds being what command the master, my brother will again find himself meriting the praise, and not he. For as the sick man does not pronounce the physician intelligent from hearing him prate of Hippocrates and Galen, but does so when he recovers health by means of the diagnosis, so the world does not pronounce the musician intelligent from hearing him ply his tongue in telling of the honored theorists of harmony. For it was not in this way that Timotheus incited Alexander to war, but by singing. To such practical performance my brother invites his opponent, and not others, for he yields to them all, and honors and reveres them all. He invites his opponent once and for all, because he wishes to devote himself to music and not to writing, except as promised on this one occasion, and, following the divine Cipriano de Rore, the Prince of Venosa, Emilio del Cavaliere, Count Alfonso Fontanella, the Count of the Camerata, the Cavalier Turchi, Pecci, and other gentlemen of that heroic school, and wishes to pay no attention to nonsense and chimeras.⁶ and as soon as it is rewritten it will see the light under the title *Second Practice*

Because his opponent seeks to attack the modern music and to defend the old. These are indeed different from one another (in their manner of employing the consonances and dissonances, as my brother will make apparent). And since this difference is unknown to the opponent, let everyone understand what the one is and what the other, in order that the truth of the matter may be more clear. Both are honored, revered, and commended by my brother. To the old he has given the name of First Practice from its being the first practical usage, and the modern music he has called Second Practice from its being the second practical usage.

By First Practice he understands the one that turns on the perfection of the harmony, that is, the one that considers the harmony not commanded, but

5. Horace, *Satires* 2.3.103.

6. Venosa is Carlo del Gesualdo; also named are Giovanni de' Bardi, Giovanni del Turco, and Tomaso Pecci.

commanding, and not the servant, but the mistress of the words. This was begun by those first men who composed music in our notation for more than one voice, followed then and amplified by Ockeghem, Josquin Desprez, Pierre de la Rue, Jean Mouton, Crequillon, Clemens non Papa, Gombert, and others of those times, and was finally perfected by Messer Adriano [Willaert] in actual composition and by the most excellent Zarlino with most judicious rules.

By Second Practice—which was first renewed in our notation by Cipriano de Rore (as my brother will make apparent) and was followed and amplified not only by the gentlemen already mentioned, by Ingegneri, Marenzio, Giaches de Wert, Luzzasco, and likewise by Jacopo Peri, Giulio Caccini, and finally by loftier spirits with a better understanding of true art—he understands the one that turns on the perfection of the “melody,” that is, the one that considers harmony commanded, not commanding and makes the words the mistress of the harmony. For such reasons, he has called it “second” and not “new,” and he has called it “practice” and not “theory,” because he understands its explanation to turn on the manner of employing the consonances and dissonances in actual composition. He has not called it “Melodic Institutions” because he confesses that he is not one to undertake so great an enterprise, and he leaves the composition of such noble writings to the Cavalier Ercole Bottrigari and to the Reverend Zarlino. Zarlino used the title *Harmonic Institutions*⁷ because he wished to teach the laws and rules of harmony; my brother has used the title “Second Practice,” that is, second practical usage, because he wishes to make use of the considerations of that usage, that is, of melodic considerations and their explanations, employing only so many of them as concern his defense against his opponent.

or, the Perfections of Modern Music.

He will call it “Perfections of Modern Music” on the authority of Plato, who says, *Non ne et musica circa perfectionem melodiae versatur*⁸

Some will wonder at this, not believing that there is any other practice than that taught by Zarlino.

He has said “some” and not “all,” to indicate only the opponent and his followers. He has said “they will wonder” because he knows for certain that these men are wanting not only in understanding of the Second Practice, but (as he will make apparent) to a considerable extent, in that of the First also. They do not believe that there is any practice other than that of Messer Adriano, for the Reverend Zarlino did not intend to treat of any other practice, as he indeed declares, saying, “It never was nor is it my intention to treat of the usage of practice according to the manner of the ancients, either Greeks or Latins, even if at times I touch upon it. My intention is solely to describe the

method of those who have discovered our way of causing several parts to sound together with various modulations and various melodies, especially according to the way and manner observed by Messer Adriano.⁹ Thus the Reverend Zarlino concedes that the practice taught by him is not the one and only truth. For this reason my brother intends to make use of the principles taught by Plato and practiced by the divine Cipriano and by modern usage, principles different from those taught and established by the Reverend Zarlino and practiced by Messer Adriano.

But let them be assured concerning consonances and dissonances

But let the opponent and his followers be assured that “with regard to the consonances and dissonances” [means] “with regard to the manner of employing the consonances and dissonances.”

that there is a different way of considering them from that already determined,

By the “determined” way of considering the consonances and dissonances, which turns on the manner of their employment, my brother understands those rules of the Reverend Zarlino that are to be found in the third book of his *Institutions*, which tend to show the practical perfection of the harmony, not of the melody, as is clearly revealed by the musical examples he gives there. Showing in actual music the meaning of his precepts and laws, these [examples] are seen without regard for the words. Therefore they show the harmony to be the mistress and not the servant. For this reason, my brother will prove to the opponent and his followers that, when the harmony is the servant of the words, the manner of employing the consonances and dissonances is not determined in the abovementioned way. Therefore the one harmony differs from the other in this respect.

one that defends the modern manner of composition with the assent of reason and of the senses.

“With the assent of the reason” because he will take his stand upon the consonances and dissonances approved by mathematics (for he has said “with regard to the manner of employing them”) and because he will likewise take his stand upon the command of the words, the chief mistress of the art considered from the point of view of the perfection of the melody, as Plato affirms in the third book of his *Republic*¹⁰ (for he has said “Second Practice”).

“With assent of the senses” because the combination of words commanding with rhythm and harmony obedient to them (and I say “obedient” because the combination in itself is not enough to perfect the melody) affects the disposition of mind. Here is what Plato says: *Sola enim melodia ab omnibus quotunque distrahit animum retrahens contrahit in se ipsum* [For only melody, cunctaque distrahit animum retrahens contrahit in se ipsum] [For only melody, cunctaque distrahit animum retrahens contrahit in se ipsum]

7. Venice, 1558.

8. Gorgias 449d: “Does not music also turn on the perfection of the melody?”

9. *Sopplimenti musicali*, bk. 1, chap. 1, p. 9.

10. *Republic* 398d p. 10.

turning the mind away from all things whatsoever that distract, reduces the mind to itself].¹¹

And not harmony alone, be it ever so perfect, as the Reverend Zarlino concedes in these words, "If we take harmony absolutely, without adding to it anything else, it will have no power to produce any extrinsic effect." He adds a little further on, "In a certain way, it intrinsically prepares for and disposes to joy or sadness, but it does not on this account lead to the expression of any extrinsic effect."¹²

I wanted to say this both so that the expression "second practice" would not be appropriated by others

My brother has made known to the world that this expression is assuredly his, in order that it may be known and concluded that when his adversary said in the second part of *L'Artusi*,¹³ p. 33: "This Second Practice, which may in all truth be said to be the dregs of the First . . .," he spoke as he did to speak evil of my brother's works. This was in the year 1603, when my brother had first decided to begin writing his defense of himself against his opponent and when the expression "Second Practice" had barely passed his lips, a sure indication that his adversary was desirous of defaming in the same vein my brother's words and his music as well. And for what reason? Let him say it who knows; let him see it who can find it in writing! But why does the adversary show so much astonishment in that discourse of his, saying further, "You show yourself as jealous of that expression as though you feared that someone would rob you of it," as though he meant to say, in his language, "You should not fear such a theft, for you are not worth imitating, let alone robbing"? I inform him that, if the matter has to be considered in this light, my brother will have not a few arguments in his favor, in particular for the *canto alla francese* [melody in the French style] in this modern manner, which has been a matter of marvel for the three or four years since it was published and which he has applied now to motets, now to madrigals, now to canzonets and airs. Who before him brought it to Italy, until he returned from the baths of Spa¹⁴ in the year 1599? Who before him began to apply it to Latin and Italian words in our tongue? Has he not then composed these *Scherzi*? There would be much to say of this to his advantage, and still more (if I wished) of other things, but I pass over them in silence since, as I have said, the matter does not need to be considered in this light. He will call it "Second Practice" with regard to the manner of its employment; with regard to its origin it might be called "First."

and so that man of intellect might meanwhile consider other second thoughts concerning harmony.

11. Marsilio Ficino, *Compendium in Timaeum*, chap. 30. Compare Plato, *Timaeus* 47d.

12. *Istituzioni armoniche*, pt. 2, chap. 7, p. 84.

13. Venice, 1603.

14. Belgian town southeast of Liège.

"Other thoughts," that is, not clinging obstinately to the belief that the whole requirement of art cannot be found elsewhere than in the rules of the First Practice on the ground that, in all varieties of composition, the harmony is always the same thing, being pre-determined and thus incapable of obeying the words perfectly. "Secondary thoughts," that is, concerning the Second Practice, or the perfection of the melody. "Concerning harmony," that is, concerning not merely the portions or "passages" of a composition, but its fruit. For if the opponent had considered the harmony of my brother's madrigal "O Mirtillo"¹⁵ in this light, he would not, in that discourse of his, have uttered such extravagances with regard to its mode, although he appears to be speaking in general when he says this. *L'Artusi* has likewise explained and demonstrated the confusion introduced into composition by those who begin in one mode, follow this with another, and end with one wholly unrelated to the first and second ideas, which is like hearing the talk of a madman, who, as the saying goes, runs with the hare and hunts with the hounds. Poor fellow, he does not perceive that, while he is posing before the world as preceptor ordinary, he falls into the error of denying the mixed modes. If these did not exist, would not the Hymn of the Apostles,¹⁶ which begins in the sixth mode and ends in the fourth, be running with the hare and hunting with the hounds? And likewise the Introit "Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum" and especially the "Te Deum laudamus"? Would not Josquin be an ignoramus for having begun his mass on "Faisant regrets"¹⁷ in the sixth mode and finished it in the second? The "Nasce la pena mia" of the excellent Striggio,¹⁸ the harmony of which composition (from the point of view of the first practice) may well be called divine—would it not be a chimera, being built upon a mode consisting of the first, eighth, eleventh, and fourth? The madrigal "Quando, signor, lasciate" of the divine Cipriano de Rore¹⁹ which begins in the eleventh mode, passes into the second and tenth in the middle, and ends in the first [mode], and the second part in the eighth—would not this thing of Cipriano's be a truly trifling vanity? And what would Messer Adriano be called for having begun in the first mode in "Ne projicias nos in tempore senectutis" (a motet for five voices to be found at the end of his first book),²⁰ making the middle in the second mode and the end in the fourth? But let the opponent read chapter 14 ["On the common or mixed modes"] of the fourth book of the Reverend Zarlino's *Institutions*, and he will learn.

And have faith that the modern composer builds on foundations of truth and you will fare well.

15. The madrigal from Monteverdi's *Madrigals*, Book 5 that follows "Cruda Amarilli."

16. "Exsultet coelum laudibus" from the Roman Antiphony, *Hymni antiqui*, p. 33.

17. His *Masses*, Book III (Venice, 1514).

18. Alessandro Striggio, *Madrigals a 6* (1560).

19. His *Madrigals*, Book IV a 5 (1557).

20. Adrian Willaert, *Motecta a 5*, Book I (1539).

My brother has said this, finally, knowing that because of the command of the words, modern composition does not and cannot observe the rules of [the first] practice, and that only a method of composition that takes account of this command will be so accepted by the world that it may justly be called a usage. Therefore he cannot believe and never will believe—even if his own arguments are insufficient to sustain the truth of such a usage—that the world will be deceived, even if his opponent is. And farewell.

84 Pietro della Valle

The Roman nobleman Pietro della Valle (1586–1652) is best known for his travels—first throughout Italy, then on the sea fighting pirates—as a pilgrim to the Holy Land and as an observant sojourner in the Middle East, Persia, Turkey, and India. He left Rome before 1609 and returned in 1626 with his second wife, a Persian, and the remains of his first wife, a Georgian. He also brought back a memoir of his travels (published 1650–63), a grammar of the Turkish language, decipherments of cuneiform writing, notes on Eastern astrology, and a wealth of other exotica. He quickly reentered the world of the gentlemen's academies, which included musical performances at their meetings in his own palace. As a youth he had studied harpsichord, gamba, theorbo, counterpoint, and dancing, and had developed an ear that would prompt his studies of Neapolitan and Sicilian song, as well as music of the East. He wrote two librettos for music (in 1606 and 1629) and maintained an intense correspondence with the music antiquarian, Giovanni Battista Doni, proposing instruments that would execute all kinds of ancient and exotic modes. He and Doni had instruments built with multiple keyboards and fingerboards in order to play diatonic, chromatic, and enharmonic genera and transpositions of the modes. Della Valle composed four dialogues using these instruments, two of which received public performance at the oratory of San Marcello in 1641.

None of Della Valle's more uncommon interests diminished his appreciation of the public and private music that he heard around him, of which his 1640 discourse in favor of contemporary music bears vivid and concrete testimony. He begins with well-known arguments about compositional style itself—polyphony versus audibility of the text, and consistent imitative texture versus a variety of textures. He also provides a description of the newest musical genres, including the oratorio. But it is as a listener that Della Valle offers valuable comparisons of past and present performance and performers, describing the delight of improvised embellishment in sensitive ensemble playing, praising the greater variety of expressive devices used by modern singers, and extolling the abilities of the castrati and a new cohort of women singers.

FROM Of the Music of Our Time Which Is Not At All Inferior but Rather Is Better than That of the Past Age

DISCOURSE TO LELIO GUIDICCIIONI
(1640)

The other evening Your Lordship said that in the last fifty years music had lost much, and that today there weren't good men in this profession similar to those of the past age. I, who seemed in great measure to disagree, had many things to say to Your Lordship about this. But because we went on to other discussions, and then it came time to take leave of each other, I did not have the opportunity to offer Your Lordship my reasons, which I have decided to send to you written down, hoping that you would favor me by listening to them and would better consider them all together.

I say therefore, that in the first place we must distinguish things in order not to speak confusedly, because counterpoint is one thing, sound is another, melody another—all parts of music; and finally, music in an absolute sense is yet another. Music is a general name that comprises all the things mentioned above that are parts of it, and there are other parts besides. But let it suffice that we speak only of what I have named, to which the other things can easily be reduced. And speaking thus absolutely about music does not at all verify Your Lordship's proposition (pardon me for speaking freely, because it is allowed in differences of opinion and cannot be avoided) on the basis of what are, so to speak, the parts of it, which, I hope, will be proved to Your Lordship in full.

Counterpoint, that part of music most necessary to make good use of every other part, has for its aim not only the foundations of music, but perhaps even more, artifice and the most detailed subtleties of this art. These are fugues forwards and backwards, simple or double, imitations,¹ canons, and *perfidie*,² and other elegances made like these, which, if used at the right time and place, adorn music marvelously. They are not however to be used continuously, neither always all of them nor always the same ones, but only those which are appropriate, whenever they are appropriate: now these, now those, and often

TEXT: "Della musica dell'età nostra, che non è punto inferiore, anzi è migliore di quella dell'età passata," in *De' trattati di musica di Gio. Batista Doni*, ed. Anton Francesco Gori, vol. 2 (Florence, 1763; facs. Bologna, 1974), pp. 249–64, repr. Angelo Solerti, *L'origine del melodramma* (Turin, 1903; facs. Bologna, [1969]), pp. 148–79). Translation, by Margaret Murata, is from pp. 148–50, 156–57, 159–66. Guidicciioni (1582–1643), a classical scholar, poet, and literary critic, also wrote a "Discorso sopra la musica," which argues that music teaches virtue (ms. dated 1632).

1. Echoes or antiphonal effects.

2. Counterpoints built on ostinato basses. Zarlino called them *pertinacia*.