Chapter IX: Instructio pro Symphoniacis
Wie die Knaben so vor andern sonderbare Lust und Liebe um singen tragen uff jetzige Italianische Maniere zu informiren und zu unterrichten seyn

Translated by Sion M. Honea
Translator’s Preface

Praetorius’ statement on “The Italian Manner” of singing from *Syntagma Musicum III* is included here in the series on the Italian diminution technique as a kind of “bookend” corresponding to the works of the other northerners Coclico and Finck. All explicitly or allusively associate the technique with the Italians but are not themselves Italian. This identification of vocal diminution with Italian vocal practice must be the result of a special Italian concentration on virtuosic development, for the technique is itself an outgrowth of the many different types of improvised counterpoint that are documented across western Europe in the Middle Ages. Coclico, Finck and Praetorius thus frame this apparently special Italian development, but Praetorius also stands in a very important position as through whose influence most particularly the new, baroque emotional style of vocal performance passed into German lands.

Clearly German composers and performers were not wholly unaware of Italian vocal style prior to Praetorius, neither of the older contrapuntally improvised diminutions nor of the new emotionally conceived ornamental style. Thus, Praetorius’ specific acknowledgement of both Bovicelli and Caccini is significant, for the former is a major exponent of the older and the latter the vindicator of the newer style. It is also significant that Caccini’s work obviously holds a far greater influence over Praetorius’ presentation. Caccini was essentially correct in his rather contemptuous dismissal of the older style—it is not well-suited to the new emotional communication of the text. Francesco Rognoni, who is a transitional figure himself, specifically acknowledges this in his very interesting address to singers at the end of part 1 of his *Selva de vari Passaggi*. In sum: the old diminution technique is too inherently predisposed to emphasize the virtuosity of the singer and the singer himself over the meaning of the text.

The importance of Praetorius’ brief exposition of the Italian Manner is, then, symbolic of the introduction and acceptance of Italian emotional practice among the Germans. This came at a crucial time in the evolution of the German baroque and its development in part from the musical background of the Reformation. As alluded to in a note below, the new emotional style and its objective of communicating a text effectively segued quite easily from Luther’s concept of a more mystical and spiritual purpose of music in communicating sacred text. The subject is far too large and complex to enter upon here, but it was the stature of Praetorius and his work as composer and scholar that went far to establish the credibility of the new Italian approach. In passing, it is worth noting that Praetorius, like Coclico and Finck, directs his comments specifically to the training of choristers (*symphoniach*) young choir boys (tiros), consistent with the Lutheran tradition rather than to professional singers as Caccini did.

Disentangling seventeenth-century German elaborate prose is no slight task! For this reason I have had to depart farthest from my practice of remaining as close as possible to the text. Almost always my departures involve only considerable rearrangement of syntactic structures rather than rewording and paraphrasing. I do not find Praetorius’ musical examples particularly important or so involved as to preclude verbal description; nonetheless, I have transcribed them in total (1) because they are not so very long, and (2) because of Praetorius own stature—for which reason many readers will no doubt wish to see what Praetorius himself gave.
Chapter IX: Instruction for Choristers

How boys such as possess above others special enjoyment and love of singing
are to be informed and instructed in the

Current Italian Style

[329] Just as the duty of an orator is not only to ornament an oration with words appearing beautiful and lively and with impressive figures, but also to pronounce correctly and move the affections,\(^1\) by speaking now raising his voice and now letting it fall, now with stronger or gentler, now with more complete and more full voice. Thus is it in the nature of a musician not only to sing, but rather to sing artfully and charmingly. In so doing the listener’s heart is stirred and the affections moved, and thus the song may fulfill the inherent purpose it was created for and to which it was directed.

Then a singer must not only be talented and experienced in a voice impressive by nature but also with good understanding and complete knowledge of music; that he knows how to produce an accento with delicate skill and with discernment as well as to introduce and apply the modulations or coloraturas (as the passaggi are called by the Italians) not in every place in the song but, rather, appropriately at the right time and specific amount, so that the loveliness of the voices and the art are well perceived and heard.

Since those are not to be praised, who—gifted by God and Nature with a particularly lovely, trembling and wavering or [230] throbbing voice and with a round neck and throat for diminution—do not let themselves be bound to the law of musicians but only continually with it make all too many coloraturas, which exceed the prescribed limits in the song and to that degree so spoil and obscure it that one doesn't know what they sing and cannot hear much less understand the text or the notes (as the composer set and gave the best ornament and grace to the song).

This unrestrained manner, then (of which quite a few instrumentalists make use) the listeners, especially those who possess something of the art, less moves and pleases, indeed, much more does it make them annoyed and bored. Therefore, so as not to deprive the song of its natural power and grace, which the composer gave it, by means of such deformity of diminutions, but rather so that it may be understood by means of the fullness of each word and idea, it is most necessary that the singers practice industriously from youth onward in voice and articulated performance,\(^2\) and make these known to them.

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1 The term symphoniacus can refer to either a choir or a chorister. In pre-Reformation and Reformation times the German school choir was often called the *chorus symphoniacus*. Here the use of the plural and the context indicates that “choristers” is intended.

2 The purpose of music as to move the affections, the emotions, is already a significant step toward the later *Affektenlehre* and away from Luther’s more medieval and Pythagorean understanding of the power of music to move the spirit to divine feelings through metaphysical or mystical means.

3 The phrase is “pronunciatione articulate.” Pronunciatio is the usual word for performance, not pronunciation, in a musical context. Articulata is most likely in the sense of “articulated,” “joined together.” Thus the phrase
But how one is to become accustomed to do this and in what form and according to the present “New Italian Style” in singing with good manner: to express the accentos and affect, also to put into practice the trills and gruppas and the other coloraturas the most reasonably and conveniently, all this same material in short—with God’s help—I intend to bring forth in a special little treatise, for which the Le Nuove Musiche of Giulio Romano, known also as Giulio Caccini, and Giovanni Battista Bovicelli have been especially helpful. ¹

There belong three things to a lovely, correct and beautiful style in singing, as also in all other arts, namely Nature, Skill (Doctrina) and Practice (Exercitatio).

1. Nature

[231] First of all a singer must have a voice by nature, in which three things are requisite and three faults are to be noted.

The requisites are these: the singer must have a beautiful, lovely, trembling and wavering voice (but not thus as so many in schools are accustomed, but rather with special moderation) and with a smooth round neck for diminutions.² Second to be able to hold a steady long breath without much respiration. For the third also to choose a vocal range such as cantus, altus, tenor, etc., which he can maintain with full and clear sound without falsetto (that is half and forced voice).

In this connection Intonatio and Exclamatio must be noted.

Intonatio

Intonatio⁶ is how to begin a song, and there are different opinions about it. Quite a few have it that it is on the correct pitch, some on the second below the correct pitch but that one gradually rises with the voice and lifts it, some in a third way, some in a fourth, quite a few say it begins with a lovely and gentle voice, of which for the most part the different kinds are included under the name of accento.

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¹ probably refers to the technique of throat articulation in specific and explains why Praetorius felt it necessary to add this to the general study of voice. This interpretation is supported by the reminiscence of Coclico and his advice in this passage.

² It is quite rare to find this kind of acknowledgment of the influence of other authors.

³ In 1562 Maffei had already placed vocal pedagogy on a sound physiological footing and identified the vocal cords as the organ of throat articulation. It is entirely possible that Praetorius did not know of Maffei’s work and so attributed the technique to secondary physical characteristics.

⁶ As will become clear, Praetorius is heavily influenced by Caccini in this discussion. The intonatio refers to how a first note should be sung. F. Rognoni calls this principiar sotto la nota and gives examples beginning a second, third or fourth below the pitch. Praetorius amplifies this, perhaps under the influence of Bovicelli who discusses the initial attack in connection with his example 9. The accento is an ornament similar in form to the intonatio; in fact, the two become essentially indistinguishable, the difference being that the intonatio is on the initial note and the accento on any note, potentially. Rognoni’s examples of the accento are simple, whereas other authors, Cerone for example, present more elaborate ones, as does Praetorius.
**Exclamatio**

The exclamatio is the proper means of moving the affect, whereby a raising of the voice must take place. It can be introduced and used with a decrescendo on all half-notes and dotted quarter-notes. The following note is particularly more expressive to the degree that it moves quickly, than the whole-note, which takes place more often in the rising and falling of the voice without any exclamatio, and it [the exclamatio] has a better grace. This will be discussed thoroughly in the aforementioned treatise and with examples.

[232] The faults in the voice are: some take many breaths and respirations, others through the nose and with the support of the voice in the neck, quite a few sing with teeth clamped together, none of which is praiseworthy, rather it deforms the harmony and makes it graceless.

Hereafter concerning Nature follows Skill or Doctrina.

**2. Skill or Doctrina**

Furthermore, a singer must have correct knowledge of how to produce diminutions (otherwise are generally called coloraturas) in a lovely and suitable way.

Diminution is when a larger note is broken and resolved into many other smaller and rapid notes. Of these, then, there are different kinds and styles, of which some take place stepwise successively, such as the accento, tremolo, groppo and tirata

**Accento**

The accento is when the notes of the following kind are produced in the throat.

NB: The notes with two flags indicated under “3” mean that they should be with three flags, of which 32 belong in one tactus.

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7 Caccini’s discussion of the *esclamazione* is famously difficult and confused. The reader should consult his text in this same series along with my notes on his meaning. Caccini’s influence is very obvious in this passage, though in a very much truncated form. F. Rognoni clarifies the ornament somewhat.

8 The affect is the emotional content of the song that is communicated to the listener’s own emotional sensibilities. This is a critical part of the “New Italian Style” that Praetorius alludes to and which is the burden of Caccini’s preface to *Le Nuove Musiche*.

9 The exclamatio on the shorter notes is more expressive than a *messa di voce* on a whole-note.

10 The treatise never appeared. Praetorius died in 1621, not long after the appearance of this book.

11 I have transcribed all as regular thirtysecond-notes.
Accento

In many of these examples Praetorius uses notation that this program cannot reproduce.

Initial and final note in unison

By ascending second

By descending second

By ascending third

By descending third
[235] Tremolo or Tremulo

The tremolo is nothing other than a trembling of the voice on one note.¹² Organists call it “mordant” or “moderant.”
This is more directed to organ and plucked instruments than to the human voice.

¹² This is an exact translation of part of Bovicelli’s definition.
[236] Gruppo or Gruppi

These are used in cadences and formal clausulas and must be struck more precisely than the tremolo.

![Gruppo](image)

Tirata

Tiratas are rapid runs and are made stepwise and run up or down on the clavier. The faster and more precise these little runs are made, so long as one can hear and comprehend every note purely, the better and more lovely it is.

[237] Diminutions that do not move stepwise are the Trillo and Passaggio.

![Tirata](image)

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13 Both cadence and clausula are terms for “cadence.” Perhaps Praetorius is distinguishing between internal and final cadences, as is typical in the literature.

14 This seems immediately intelligible in the case of the trillo, which is a pulse on a single pitch. He says that the passaggio does not move stepwise, as he will explain later, because it does not move exclusively stepwise.
Trillo

There are two kinds: the one happens on a unison, either on a line or a space, when many rapid notes are repeated in succession.\textsuperscript{15}

The other trillo is suited to different styles. To be sure, to produce a trillo correctly is impossible to learn from prescription, it is the case, then, that it happens from the voice and activity of the instructor and is sung to someone and repeated, so that one learns to observe it from another like a bird from other birds. Thus, even up to the present, except the aforementioned, Giulio Caccini, in no other Italian author is this kind of trill described.\textsuperscript{16} Rather, only on the notes that are to be produced with a trill, a “t” or a “tr” appears written above. However, I have thought it necessary to set down quite a few kinds here alongside, so that those still untrained Tiros, \textit{[who] only in seeing something, may know what approximately is called a trill.}\textsuperscript{17}

These kinds can be found in Claudio Monteverdi.

\textsuperscript{15} Praetorius’ Trillo is the same as Caccini’s. F. Rognoni calls this ornament a tremolo. Bovicelli does not mention a trillo but does provide an extremely confused discussion and wholly inadequate illustration of the tremolo. See the translation of Bovicelli in this same series, where I have argued that Rognoni’s tremolo is somewhat more likely to be what Bovicelli intends.

\textsuperscript{16} Caccini’s text of \textit{Le Nuove Musiche} is neither paged nor foliated, making references to it difficult. On the fifth page of his prefatory remarks, “To the Readers” (see the translation in this series), Caccini gives an illustration of the basic trillo, the pulse on a single pitch. He then says that since there is more than one style of music, he will demonstrate two styles of trillo and groppo, which appear on page 6. As nearly always at this time, the illustrations are rather obscure but appear to present an original passage numbered “1” and an ornamented version numbered “2.” The only two examples that are clearly labelled “trillo” are on stepwise descending original passages, and the trillo seems to be a series of short descending trillos on these pitches. To my mind Praetorius’ illustrations of the second type of trillo bear only slight resemblance to Caccini’s.

\textsuperscript{17} Praetorius’ examples leave much to be desired. He merely places a “tr” above one note in a brief melodic formula without further explanation. It seems quite remarkable that these trillos are sometimes indicated to be played on thirtysecond-notes! These illustrations give an interesting view on a time when the idea of distinctly indentifiable ornaments was new. Praetorius actually groups together a variety of different elaborations under the term.
[240] Passaggi

Passaggi are rapid runs that both ascend and descend both stepwise and by leaps through all intervals and are set and made on such notes as are appropriate.
There are two kinds: some are simply formed in half-notes or quarter-notes, or half-notes and quarter-notes together; some are made “broken,” out of eighth-notes or sixteenth-notes or eighth-notes and sixteenth-notes together.\footnote{This is not quite exactly the Italian understanding of the term “broken,” which means diminution that results in a mixture of subdivisions of the basic value being reduced, e.g., a mixture of eighth-notes and sixteenth-notes. Bovicelli even includes examples utilizing three levels: eighth-notes, sixteenth-notes and thirtysecond-note, though Dalla Casa says that four rhythmic levels are essential. Zacconi, especially clarified by Cerone, makes fairly clear that this is the meaning of “broken.” I do not recall any of the Italian sources as entertaining the idea of making passaggi out of half-notes. This and the subject of the following note 19 make clear that music in Praetorius’ time, or at least in Germany of Praetorius’ time, has experienced an inflation of rhythmic values.} The Italians call the semiminim a chromata,\footnote{It is necessary to retain the original terms here in order to demonstrate the rhythmic inflation that Praetorius’ description indicates. As in the previous note, this is not quite the terminology of his main sources, Caccini and Bovicelli, for whom semiminim = quarter-note, croma = eighth-note, semichroma = sixteenth-note, and bischroma = thirtysecond-note. Bovicelli wrote twenty-five and Caccini nearly twenty years before Praetorius, but Cerone, an Italian working and writing in Spain in 1613 still uses the Italian values, as does F. Rognoni in 1620. This seems to indicate a shift happening mainly in Germany.} the fusa a semi-chromata, the semifusas a bischromata.

Beginning students of this art, however, ought first to begin in simple and uniform passaggi and thereafter gradually exercise themselves earnestly in broken ones peppered with fusas, until they finally attain semifusas and can manage those.

3. Exercitatio

So that one can all the better grasp this, which up until now was touched upon only briefly, such must be demonstrated with all kinds and many examples diminished in a variety of styles, (then the manner of diminution is formulated from it and one derives from them what form of this and that kind of notes, and these and those intervals for the purpose of diminution and coloratura). But because such is too far-ranging and cannot be included in this book, the well-disposed musicus and cantor should make do with this until the special explanatory treatise with precepts and examples soon is published by me, with God’s help. At that time I will have shown and presented the kind musician who is eager for such a new kind of singing. Meanwhile may the benevolent and sincere musician live and prosper and continue to love and favor me, whom I desire and am eager faithfully to serve with my strength so long as I live.