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Silvestro Ganassi, *Opera intitulata Fontegara*, ed. William Dongois and Philippe Canguilhem (Genève, Droz – Haute École de musique de Genève [HEM], 2020; “Musique & Recherche” 7), 251 p. ISBN 978-2-600-06228-2

The recently published practical edition of Silvestro Ganassi's *Fontegara* is the product of a research project based at the Haute École de musique de Genève, involving the collective efforts of both musicians and scholars. The project aims to “return ornamentation and diminution to their central role in the performance of sixteenth-century music” (p. 5) and the edition claims to provide a “real tool for approaching *Fontegara*” (p. 23), aspiring to reintroduce “the proportions and complex rhythms that *Fontegara* describes in detail” to performance practice (p. 5). Similar to the outdated edition by Hildemarie Peter, the new edition follows the oblong landscape format of *Fontegara*, and it displays the diminution examples respective to each interval across one page opening, granting the reader with a prompt overview of all its variants.¹ The treatise's instructional text is arranged in three adjacent columns: the central one presents Ganassi's prose in (modern) Italian, facilitating the parallel reading of the French and English translations. The Italian text has been normalised in terms of orthography, including the expansion of abbreviations and the addition of punctuation that, consequently, leads to the standardisation of lowercase and uppercase letters.² An introductory note announces the underlying reasoning behind these modifications (p. 41-43), but the precise alterations of the text are not made visually explicit to the reader.

The edition presents the entire content of *Fontegara*, including the autograph additions found in FG-WOLFENBÜTTEL,³ complemented with a biographical sketch (p. 11-14) and a report on the editorial principles applied (p. 17-26), which are a manifestation of a particular interpretation of Ganassi's style (p. 5-9 and 167-179). Although it cannot be qualified as a critical edition, the volume offers a list of “errors and discrepancies” (diminutions which contain elements deemed questionable by the authors) followed by proposed corrections (p. 29-38). It is not entirely clear which extant copies of *Fontegara* were actually consulted during the preparation of the edition, as the editors apparently do not incorporate the fact that the eight extant copies are not identical. Consistent to the proclaimed objective of facilitating the use and application of Ganassi's treatise, the edition contains two sections, “Learning to diminish in the style of Ganassi” and “Fontegara in Practice”, that respectively offer

¹ See Hildemarie Peter, *La Fontegara – Schule des kunstvollen Flötenspiels und Lehrbuch des Diminuierens* (Berlin, 1956) and, for the English translation prepared from the German edition, Dorothy Swainson (transl.), *Opera intitulata Fontegara – A treatise on the art of playing the recorder and of free ornamentation* (Berlin, 1959). For a French edition of *Fontegara* see Christine Vossart (ed.), *Silvestro Ganassi Œuvres complètes vol. 1 – La Fontegara* (Sprimont, 2002).

² Note that all musical examples were also standardised in the Droz edition always applying a soprano clef. Alternative readings presented in this review apply the clefs as found in *Fontegara*.

³ Henceforth, the present review will apply an abridged codification system to refer to individual copies of *Fontegara* (FG) by adding the city where it is currently preserved. In order to pinpoint individual diminution examples, the code applied subsequently contains an abbreviation of the *Regola* (RP, RS, RT or RQ), the specific (ascending or descending) melodic interval, *moto* and *atto* numbers (respecting Ganassi's own terminology). The very first diminution in *Fontegara* is therefore indicated as RP-2ascM1A1 and the adjacent example as RP-2ascM1A2.

instructions on how to practice and to apply Ganassi's diminutions, summarised in a list of fifteen advices (p. 175-179) and demonstrated in twelve fully embellished sixteenth-century compositions that were prepared by members of the research team and external contributors (p. 181-243). This final section presents a valuable attempt to experiment with Ganassi's diminutions across a range of genres and settings (including solo and ensemble, vocal and instrumental diminutions).⁴ The overall presentation of the edition is luxurious and hefty (the volume weighs nearly two kilos); from the colourful hardcover to the spacious illustrations and the selection of paper used for each section of the edition the reader gets a general impression of elegance and care.

A new practical edition certainly would have the potential to substitute the previous editions. Unfortunately however, a closer examination of the Droz edition swiftly brings a few critical shortcomings to the fore. Although the new translations are indeed a step forward in comparison to earlier translations (in particular to Peter's/Swainson's),⁵ the editorial alterations of Ganassi's Italian prose are not always successful. The modifications of the punctuation are not made explicit or clarified in footnotes, forging an illusion of an authoritative access to the original source. This new punctuation creates clauses that often alter the original text significantly, reflecting a particular interpretation of the source. A clear example of the addition of punctuation that leads to a misinterpretation of Ganassi's instructions is found in chapter VI. In this fragment, Ganassi offers additional information regarding the so-called "incomplete" tonguing by adding another clarifying descriptive qualification: "cioè meza".⁶ The following segment describes the two tonguing categories in further detail, stating that the "complete" one is formed by two syllables, whereas the "incomplete" contains only one (i.e. the half of the "complete" tonguing). The translator's choice to modify the original colon in Ganassi's sentence into a full stop becomes an impediment for the correct understanding of this fragment, as "cioè" is entirely ignored in the translation and "meza" is considered the start of the following sentence (p. 62).⁷ The result is a rather clumsy translation that not only

⁴ The edition also includes a DVD with additional informative material.

⁵ Vossart's edition offers a transparent transcription of the Italian text in parallel to a satisfactory French translation.

⁶ The use of pairs of synonyms to convey the meaning of his text is characteristic for Ganassi's writing style. Often intercalated by "cioe", Ganassi clarifies his terminology or instructions, as for instance: "voce otto cioe busi" and "stropar cioe coprir" (chapter III), "due numeri differenti cioe inegale" or even "mutar le figure delle minute cioe delle semiminime in minime" (chapter XIV).

⁷ For reasons of clarity, here is a transparent transcription of Ganassi's original text: "Nota che i diti moti originali si causa alcuni effetti de lingua co[m]piuta e no[n] compiuta: cioe meza la co[m]piuta sara composta de due sillabe come son l'originale: la mezza de una sillaba over litera i[n] questo modo co[n] velocita .ttttt. over dddd: & dela sillaba de de ge che over da de di do du. pero intenderai poter mutar la prima litera in ogni altra: si come seria ta te ti to tu. ca che chi co cu: & i[n] altri modi". This fragment could be translated as follows: "Note that the above-mentioned original articulations generate some effects of the tongue [either] complete or incomplete, i.e. halved. The complete [tonguing] will be composed of two syllables, as are the original ones. The halved [tonguing will be composed of] only one syllable or letter so this way, with the speed [of performance, it becomes]: ttttt or dddd. Through the [here presented] syllable[s]: de de ge che or da de di do du, you should understand that you can exchange the first letter by any other one, as it would be [for example] in 'ta te ti to tu', 'ca che chi co cu' and so on." See Dina Titan, *The origins of instrumental diminution in Renaissance Venice: Silvestro Ganassi's Fontegara*, PhD dissertation (Utrecht, 2019), p. xxxi. The dissertation presents a complete transcription

fabricates a third and questionable category of articulation (“half-complete”), but also grammatically affects the following sentence.

Nota che i diti moti originali si causa alcuni effetti de lingua compiuta e non compiuta. Cioè meza la compiuta sarà composta de due sillabe come son l'originale. La mezza de una sillaba over litera in questo modo con velocità t t t t t over d d d d d. E de la sillaba de de ge che over da de di do du.

Note that the fundamental tonguings produce effects of the tongue that are either complete or incomplete. The half-complete effect will be made up of two syllables like the fundamental tonguings. The half syllable or letter articulated in this way at speed: t t t t t or d d d d d and the complete syllable de de ge ke, or da de di do du.⁸

Surely Ganassi's intricate prose leaves room for multiple interpretations and distinct translations. The issue here is the lack of transparency, as the reader remains unaware of the specific editorial modifications made to the Italian prose and, consequently, to the translations.⁹ In light of Ganassi's proposed aim of *Fontegara*, to imitate the human voice (i.e. *imitar il parlar*), and the authors' alleged focus on the practical application of the treatise, the misinterpretation of Ganassi's categorisation of articulations is fairly crucial, as it has fundamental repercussions for the editorial principles as well: “tonguing in all Renaissance treatises is binary” (p. 25), which serves as an additional argument for perceiving Ganassi's diminutions as if standardly “divided in four, five, six, or seven crotchets, which are in turn divided in two quavers or four semiquavers” (p. 22). The chosen principles hide recurrent stylistic features (a fact acknowledged by the authors on p. 23 and discussed in detail below) and disregard Ganassi's “incomplete” tonguing, which is in essence unitary. Ganassi's technical discussion offers a rich and flexible approach that allows for fluent articulation of notes, both according to binary and ternary groupings.

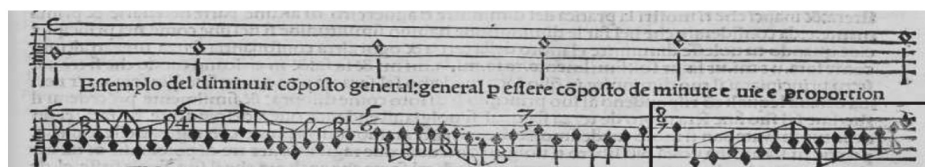
of the Italian text prepared after the comparison of all extant copies, presented in parallel to the English translation of the treatise, see Annexe I, p. I-CVII.

⁸ See p. 62. On p. 63 one finds an indication that the authors did not consider the variant versions of chapter VII: a fragment of the text appears simply as “altro effetto si non che la serve media de una sillaba” (as presented in FG-BOLOGNA, FG-BRUSSELS, FG-JENA, FG-WOLFENBÜTTEL), whereas in FG-FLORENCE, FG-ROME, FG-BERLIN, FG-WASHINGTON the text reads “altro effetto si non che serve la media de una sillaba”, as discussed in detail in D. Titan, *The origins of instrumental diminution*, p. 43-50, and in a forthcoming article by the same author to be published in *Recercare*, 34 (2022).

⁹ Also troublesome in this respect is the handling of certain passages of chapter XIII, which leads to the misinterpretation of the rules regarding counterpoint and syncopation (p. 72), and of chapter XIX (p. 143) in which Ganassi presents a flexible approach to his diminution examples, explaining how to apply them to minims as well as to note values longer than a semibreve. As a result, in the section “*Fontegara* in Practice”, the reader is confronted with a misleading application of Ganassi's instructions that range from the halving of the note values of the original composition to the occasional doubling of the note values of Ganassi's diminutions. See, for example, Timea Nagy's versions of Tromboncino's *Zephyro spira* (p. 196-198) and Cara's *Per dolor mi bagno* (p. 199-201), which displays in particular the anomalous “decuplets” in bars 14 and 34, (respectively applying RS-2descM1A5 and RS-3descM1A4 in doubled note values), Vicente Parrilla's embellishment of Josquin's *Nymphes, nappés* (p. 222-224) and William Dongois' version of *La Paduana del Re*, (p. 204-208).

The edition includes several blunt and unacceptable errors, such as, for instance, the translation of relative solmization syllables as absolute pitches in English (p. 70) and the extensive tacit alterations of the musical example in chapter XII of *Fontegara* (p. 69). Unlike modern time signatures, the numerical signs used by Ganassi are indicators of the continuous mutation of proportions and, in this example, offer a prompt insight on the changing number of crotchets applied to embellish each semibreve of the model in relation to the preceding one (example 1). In this particular example, the authors substitute all numerical indicators with anachronistic quintuplets, sextuplets and septuplets, and also (tacitly) modified the original note values of the final embellishment, exchanging the quavers for semiquavers. As it stands in the original source, this is the only example that displays a diminution in *proportio dupla*, as discussed in chapter XVII of *Fontegara*. Ganassi's meticulous overall design, which carefully links the various textual and musical sections, is misrepresented in the modern edition.¹⁰ Curiously, exactly the same inaccuracy appears in Peter's edition. To make matters worse, the Droz edition also incorrectly transcribed the embellishments of the third and fourth semibreves by actually inserting diminutions from previous musical examples.

Example 1



Exemple de la diminution composée en général; c'est-à-dire quant aux valeurs de note, aux contours mélodiques et aux proportions:

Esemplo del diminuir composto general: general per essere composto de minute e vie e proportion

Examples of general compound diminishing: compound in note values, melodic contour and proportion:

¹⁰ Another example of the close interaction between Ganassi's text and music, evidencing a pre-conceptualised framework pertinent to *Fontegara*, is the fact that for each diminution applied in the musical examples in chapters XX and XXI, and consequently described in the text, Ganassi made sure to insert additional reference numbers in the main corpus of the *Regole*. For the added reference numbers (which remain wanting in the new edition), see RP-2ascM4A4, RP-2ascM14A6, RP-C5A3, RS-2ascM6A3, RS-2descM14A5, RT-3descM6A4 and finally, RQ-M10A1. Note that for the example in chapter XXI, Ganassi combines half of RQ-M10A1 with RS-2ascM6A3, demonstrating the application of the diminutions of *moti mediati* to embellish individual minims, even featuring two different proportions.

Central to the edition is the hypothesis proposed by the researchers, which remains safely close to the complete title of the treatise: “*Fontegara* could be seen as a work of a professional musician trying to transmit a particular performance style in treatise form” (p. 6).¹¹ The edition testifies to a generally anachronistic approach combined with a tendency to oversimplify or even ignore the stylistic features that are unique to the treatise. Intriguingly, the acknowledged “oddity” of the style, which is summarised as the “Ganassi riddle” (p. 6-9 and 29, and on the DVD), seems to coexist with the formulated hypothesis which focusses on the “normalcy” of Ganassi’s style, even stating that the “smaller melodic-rhythmic cells that made up the longer figures were all quite common” (p. 7). The overall interpretation of style gives a strong impression of being the result of a pre-determined outcome of the research. Ganassi’s diminutions are approached mainly as a manifestation of an improvised (oral) tradition, forging a fictitious historical line that leads to an anachronistic understanding of his style by emphasising similarities to the much later diminution treatises, of course unknown to the author of *Fontegara*. Both the importance given to improvisation (for example, p. 25-26) and the already mentioned over-simplification of articulations as “binary” are used as additional justification for the editorial principles, which admittedly hide “interior structures – symmetries and other forms of organization” (p. 23). These hidden structures are not deemed as an obstacle for the edition to be a “real tool for approaching *Fontegara*”: the improvisational character of diminutions requires a certain “automatism” and would actually not allow for “placing emphases within diminutions” (p. 26). The uniqueness of Ganassi’s style, which has bedazzled generations of musicians and scholars, is quickly flattened out and normalised: the rhythmic complexity is simply set aside and described as a “soaring” auditive experience (p. 8), a result of “an aesthetic of fluidity” (p. 26). The edition does not offer any intrinsic explanation for the undeniable rhythmical complexity of *Fontegara*, defined not only by its unique approach to proportions but also by the extensive use of rests, dotted note values and the presence of purely rhythmical diminutions. Equally, the systematic inclusion in *Fontegara* of diminutions that incorporate rhythmic formulas in retrograde (see RT-3ascM3A4 and RT-3ascM4A4 for the most complex pair of diminutions in retrograde of each other) is not discussed in the formal interpretation of style, perhaps because precisely these traits do not fit well within the forged emphases on the elements that are recurrent in later treatises. By overlooking these features, the authors clear the path to continue to describe Ganassi’s style partially as “a means to noting [*recte*: notating] what has been known since the end of the nineteenth century as ‘agogics”’ (p. 9). One only wonders how the complex diminution examples in retrograde mentioned above could ever be described as a manifestation of improvised rhythmic freedom.

¹¹ The full title of *Fontegara* reads: “*Opera Intitulata Fontegara* La quale i[n]segna a sonare di flauto cho[n]tatta [*recte*: tutta] l’arte opportuna a e[ss]e i[n]strumento massime il diminuire il quale sara utile adogni i[n]strumento di fiato et chorde: et a[n]chora a chi si diletta di canto, co[m]posta per Sylvestro di Gana[li] dal fo[n]tego sonator d[e] la Ill[ustri]ssima S[ignori]a D[i] V[enet]i[a].”

The anachronistic approach extends as far as the honest disclosure made by Dongois (p. 190), in which he informs the reader that one of the twelve fully embellished compositions in the edition had previously been conceived in the style of Bassano (c. 1561-1617) and was subsequently transformed into the style of Ganassi. In other words, the reader is confronted with a “Ganassified” version of Bassano (p. 8). Although Ganassi does encourage his reader to invent new embellishments, it is perhaps advisable at this point in time to refrain from creating and modifying the diminutions to our own taste but, instead, rigorously apply the diminutions as they stand in *Fontegara*, considering that we still are at the initial stages of understanding and mastering Ganassi’s style.

The central role the edition awards to the modern computer is even more disturbing. Two of the musicians involved in the project, William Dongois and Tiago Simas Freire, openly admit that the “computer’s voice” facilitated their access to the diminutions by having the machine play them in a loop whilst practising, and they even advise the reader to do so as well (p. 173). More than an honest confession of individual shortcomings, the embedded role of notation software directly influences the editorial principles applied and, perhaps, even the qualification of Ganassi’s style as fluid: obviously, the computer has no means to recognise the internal structures of the diminutions, thus equalising all notes. The authors even state that, for the 5/4 and 7/4 proportions, their notation criteria differ from the default software setting, claiming that the applied software automatically would subdivide these embellishments into two anti-metrical sections displaying, for example, a five crotchet measure in two identical halves of two and a half crotchets (p. 22, example [6]).¹² Surely, to do any justice to the rhythmic richness of the treatise, a meaningful insight of *Fontegara*’s musical style must emerge from the application of methods available to Ganassi.

The editorial decision to preferably visualise diminutions in *Fontegara* as sequences of crotchet beats is highly confusing. First of all, this method of notation does not fit a small number of figures (as acknowledged on p. 23). Nevertheless, the criteria are applied in a somewhat loose manner: throughout the *Regole* one encounters diminutions that could be beamed according to the editorial principles but are presented differently. Most importantly, the chosen beaming system regularly hides rhythmical symmetries and melodic motives typical of *Fontegara*. Some of these diminution figures appear distorted beyond recognition, and their internal structures, which are very clear in Ganassi’s notation, become obscure. The relation between the diminution example and its intervallic model is thereby often lost. For example, RT-5descM4A7 and RT-5descM1A6 display a logical and well-constructed melodic sequence (example 2), in which each reiteration of the motive starts on a note from the *moto*. As presented in the Droz edition, these essential features are no longer recognisable (p. 129).

¹² I am unaware of any notation software that has the described setting as standard.

Example 2



RT-5descM4A7 and RT-5descM1A6 (initial notes of each grouping correspond to the notes of the intervallic model)



RT-descM4A7 and RT-5descM1A6 as presented in the Droz edition

For RT-4ascM2A6, the authors opt for an alternative beaming so that the repetitive melodic-rhythmical units are promptly visible (example 3). Transcribed in this manner, the diminution displays a gracious repetition of ternary motives (equivalent to the time span of one dotted crotchet) and is easily playable.¹³ Surprisingly, for other diminutions containing comparable ternary motives, such as RT-3descM5A5 and the diminutions in example 2, the chosen beaming represents standard crotchet beats that deform the repetition of the figures (example 4).

Example 3



RT-4ascM2A6 in the Droz edition

Example 4



RT-3descM5A5 in the Droz edition (p.121) RT-3descMA5 – alternative reading¹⁴

Many other examples attest to the fact that the symmetries between sections of a single diminution and also of consecutive diminution examples were not deemed important (perhaps a consequence of the role of the computer as well?). For example, the preferred beaming often hides the fact that certain diminutions contain two identical halves.¹⁵ In RQ-M5A3, A5 and A6 (example 5), the transcription in modern

¹³ For a discussion on the principles that lead to the alternative grouping of notes in this diminution, see D. Titan, *The origins of instrumental diminution*, p. 114-119 and 222-231.

¹⁴ Note how this example demonstrates Ganassi's recurrent handling of symmetries adding an inversion of the rhythmic motives.

¹⁵ For instance, see RS-2ascM5A7 and RS-2ascM13A7, both on p. 95.

crotchets beats eliminates the gracious melodic flow that combines binary and ternary rhythmic units, and destroys the meticulously crafted correlation between diminutions of a specific interval (as if they would be faster moving variants of each other). The same applies to RS-5descM6A2 and RS-5descM6A4 (example 6). Here the *moto* notes are presented twice in a straightforward binary rhythm, before proceeding to a ternary flow. Both the gracious variation of figures in RS-5descM6A4 and the similarity between the two diminutions are lost in the Droz edition.

Example 5

a. RQ-M5A3, RQ-M5A5 and RQ-M5A6 as presented in the Droz edition



b. Alternative interpretation of RQ-M5A3, RQ-M5A5 and RQ-M5A6 (original clef notation)



Example 6: RS-5descM6 followed by the corresponding *atti* 2 and 4.



RS-5descM6 (Droz edition)



RS-5descM6A2



RS-5descM6A4 (Droz edition)



RS-5descM6A4 (alternative reading)

This is a frontal contradiction to the initial statements by the authors regarding the difficulties to “decipher the sound of the music behind the figures”, due to the impossibility of accessing Ganassi’s style “through oral transmission”, and the proposed aim “to create an edition that would be clear and straightforward to use” (p. 7). Allegedly, “new editions need to be adjusted to account for the fact that today’s musician is essentially a reader who learns from the score” and “the musicians eye and its habits must be taken into consideration” (p. 17) but yet, the Droz edition offers a rendering of the diminutions which, in many instances, conceals the music from the eyes of the performers.

The relation between *moto* and *atto* is of great importance for Ganassi because diminutions are an ornament to the counterpoint (see chapter XIII of *Fontegara*). He carefully respects the multiple variants of *moti* by placing the intermediary *moto* notes in their respective positioning in his diminutions, and even adds vertical dashes in diminutions that correspond to a *moto mediato*, i.e. formed by two minims. In fact, the dashed *atti* are carefully composed so that the counterpoint (as displayed in the *moti mediati*) is respected from one minim to the next. For an overwhelming majority of these examples, each half of the diminution is melodically circular (respecting Ganassi’s rule regarding the beginning and ending pitch of a diminution).¹⁶ The note directly before the reference mark restates the initial *moto* note, and the note straight after the dash displays the second minim of the *moto*, creating two halves of the diminutions that correspond directly to each of the minims (see chapter XXI). For example, a *Regola seconda* diminution designed for the ornamentation of a semibreve (without a dash) most likely features figures designed on the level of five crotchets. For the dashed *atti*, on the other hand, the ornamentation of each minim features the equivalent of five quavers, creating diminutions that often display compositional traits such as retrograde rhythmic formulas, symmetries and repetition of melodic figures. In RQ-C6A1, for instance, two vertical dashes were printed, bringing the three sections of the cadence diminution to the fore (a feature specially handy for modern musicians who rely on their eyes to discover the music hidden behind the figures!). The two sections respective to the minims of the model contain the equivalent of seven quavers, whereas the embellishment of the central semibreve displays a proportionally extended version of the same melodic contour, now consisting of seven crotchets in total. The very same applies to the next diminution of this cadence model, RQ-C6A2, even though the dash is wanting.

Example 7



¹⁶ See chapter XIII (“similitudine si nel fine come nel principio”) and chapter XIX. This paragraph is partially correctly translated (“You will note the way I treated the interval of the divided second in two minims which a leap, so that you can learn to diminish from one minim to the next”) but then the editorial alterations of the punctuation corrupt Ganassi’s explanation on how unison diminutions can be applied to ornament larger note values such as breve, long and maxima, as well as his explanation regarding syncopation (p. 143).

The function of the dashes apparently remained enigmatic, as one of the authors confesses that they “were not always found where I felt I most needed them” (p. 25). The misconception starts to take shape as the dashes are not only viewed as “a form of melodic-rhythmic orientation”, but also “can be understood as aids indicating the pace or tempo the performer should adopt to reach the end of the first minim” (p. 25). On p. 174-176, however, the researchers offer contradictory information, stating that as “Ganassi suggests only diminutions on semibreves, but melodic motifs are frequent in the polyphony of his time, we can envisage either dividing the values in the figures in his treatise or only considering the reference points on the level of the semibreve”. Their advice number 3 (p. 175) reads “it is good to respect the structural reference points of the model (on the level of minims or semibreves)” but, puzzlingly, immediately thereafter the authors disregard all minims, reducing the musical example to only semibreves (p. 176). Ganassi’s diligent efforts to respect the counterpoint on the level of the minim are now entirely lost. Supporting his unequivocal instruction on how to ornament individual minims, Ganassi also offers a musical example in chapter XXI that displays a combination of minim diminutions, in two different proportions and clearly separated by the vertical dashes both in the melody (above) and on the ornamented version (below). Either a sign of lack of thoroughness or a convenient choice of the authors, the new edition fails to reproduce these dashes in this musical example (p. 145). It is relevant to remark, also in regards to their somewhat loose approach to the different extant copies, that the authors transferred some handwritten annotations found exclusively in FG-BOLOGNA to the edition as if they would be an integral element of *Fontegara*, and even take these markings, although obvious traces of a later user, into account in their understanding of the printed reference marks (p. 24). The faulty transcription also appears in Peter’s edition.¹⁷ The erroneous transference of the handwritten marks evinces, from another viewpoint, the authors’ misunderstanding of the practical function of the printed dashes. As a consequence, the inappropriate application of diminutions by discarding the different nature of the *moti mediati* and *moti non mediati* easily leads to the violation of counterpoint when embellishing compositions.¹⁸

Led by Ganassi’s reference to the superiority of the human voice in comparison to instrumental music, the authors emphasise the “vocal nature of diminutions” and

¹⁷ RP-C3A2, A3, A4 and A5 in FG-BOLOGNA contain added vertical handwritten markings, perhaps a user’s attempt to decode the rhythmic layout of the cadences, which serve an entirely different purpose than the printed vertical dashes found throughout *Fontegara*. The authors are apparently aware that these markings are exclusive to FG-BOLOGNA but nevertheless wrongly consider them as an integral element of the original print.

¹⁸ Here is an abridged list of problematic embellishments in the section “Fontegara in Practice” that violate contrapuntal rules: p. 185/bar 35 (RT-4descM2A2; applies an incorrect *moto mediato* to embellish a sequence of minims); p. 228/bar 30 (RT-3descM9A6; applies a *moto mediato* to embellish a semibreve); p. 231/bar 82 (RT-2descM11A3; applies a *moto non mediato* where two minims should be embellished using a *moto mediato*); p. 240/bar 32 (RQM10A3; applies an incorrect *moto mediato* to embellish a sequence of minims). Furthermore, this section features a number of other choices that conflict with the authors’ own advices and editorial principles as, for instance, doubling of original note values of the compositions, use of the anachronistic G clef, doubling of the note values of Ganassi’s diminutions (thus misinterpreting the instructions in chapter XXI and XXII of *Fontegara*), use of anachronistic ties and inconsequent beaming (obscuring the relation between the diminutions examples as presented in this section in comparison to their appearance in the corpus of the treatise).

the “idea that diminutions should be ‘singable’” (p. 175). This view is difficult to reconcile with the valorisation of the “computer’s voice” (p. 173), and discards that, at the end of chapter I, Ganassi defines the aim of his treatise as “imitation of speech” (*imitar il parlar*). Unfortunately, the authors of the new edition do not engage in the ongoing academic debate on this matter.¹⁹

The section “Learning to Diminish in the Style of Ganassi” (an unfortunate English translation of the Italian verb *diminuire* and of its French counterpart *diminuer*, as the verb *diminish* has another connotation in regards to music theory), deserves some attention.²⁰ In this section, the authors implement Ganassi’s categorisation of diminutions (presented in chapters IX–XII of *Fontegara*) as a methodology for learning to embellish (p. 168). The design of the system is quite clear and correctly represented in a table on p. 167: three parameters (note value, melodic path and proportion) offer means to variation, gradually increasing the level of complexity. However, *Fontegara* contains a noteworthy imperfection: the fifth and seventh musical examples illustrate one and the same category (i.e. compound in note value and melodic contour and simple in proportion) and Ganassi offers no example for the category “compound in note value and proportion and simple in melodic path”. It is then highly disconcerting to note that, without further ado, the flaw in *Fontegara*’s musical examples has been carelessly transported into the methodological proposals of the Droz edition (p. 170, examples 5 and 7). Could it be that the authors did not realise that one category was missing when engaging in their practical experimentations?

Last but not least, the edition suffers from a notable lack of academic rigour and transparency combined with a somewhat loose (at times even careless) handling of the original source. To avoid a tedious enumeration, the present review will discuss only a few representative instances.

The biographical sketch includes references to the brothers Ganassi (partially relying on Armando Fiabane’s account in *Lettera su Ganassi*). Strangely, the French text firstly informs us of three brothers, “Silvestro, Girolamo et Marco”, but in the corresponding English version of this paragraph only Silvestro and Marco are mentioned (p. 13). In the following paragraph (in both English and French), Silvestro apparently had even more siblings: Girolamo, Giovanni (Zuanne), Venturin, Giacomo, and Marco. Fiabane’s unconventional article is deprived of any archival references and left many questions unanswered, but it does not contain any reference to either Marco or Giacomo Ganassi. Equally, neither Pio Stefano’s book nor Marco di Pasquale’s recent article mention these mysterious additional brothers.²¹ Perhaps

¹⁹ Recent academic research has demonstrated that “imitar il parlar” is actually a core element in the conception of Ganassi’s musical style. See D. Titan, *The origins of instrumental diminution*.

²⁰ Obviously, intervals can be qualified as “diminished”. The authors also frequently use the verb “diminish” as a synonym for “embellish” or “ornament” in their translation of *Fontegara*. See, for example, the translation of the titles of chapters XIV, XV, XVI and XVII, or several occurrences on p. 65, 66, 71. On p. 141, “diminish” (referring to “embellish”) is used in a sentence that mentions the interval of an ascending second, creating even greater confusion: “Note that the formula which diminishes the ascending second [...]”.

²¹ See Martin Kirnbauer, “Armando Fiabanes *Lettera su Ganassi*”, *Glareana*, 61 (2012), p. 40–54; Pio Stefano, *Viol and Lute Makers of Venice 1490–1630* (Venice, 2011), p. 88 and 118, and finally, Marco di Pasquale, “Silvestro Ganassi: a documented biography”, *Recercare*, 31 (2019), p. 29–102. The authors of

the authors have found proof of their existence, but in that case it is rather frustrating that they do not offer references to these newly discovered archival sources. Instead of promoting clarity and academic transparency, the edition sets a step backwards, leaving the readers with the same uncertainty that was once left by Fiabane's article.

Although the edition does not aim to be a critical edition, in the section "Errors and Discrepancies" (p. 29-38) the reader is confronted with a variety of imperfections that do not adhere to any editorial standards. The inaccuracies range from faulty labelling²² to incorrect transpositions and transcriptions of diminution examples.²³ The proposed correction for *moto di quarta discendente ligne 1, exemple 5* (p. 33) raises questions regarding the acquaintance of the authors with all extant copies: this diminution is indeed incorrect in seven copies of *Fontegara*, but it has been corrected in FG-BRUSSELS.²⁴ It is of course possible to propose an alternative correction of this diminution but, in that case, the author's choice to deviate from the correction presented in one of the original sources should be transparently communicated. Remarkably, the alternative solution proposed in the Droz edition is identical to Peter's edition.

Example 8



RT-4descM1A5 in FG-BRUSSELS

	Version originale	Correction proposée
<i>Moto di quarta discendente</i> ligne 1, exemple 5		

the new edition apparently had access to the findings of Marco di Pasquale prior to the publication of his thorough account of Silvestro Ganassi's biography, as a few pieces of information are included without archival references (for example, the fact that Silvestro's second wife was Urania Bembo). Pasquale's well-documented article contains references to all archival sources as well as a reproduction of most of the documents, finally filling many of the lacunae that were left by Fiabane's research.

²² See p. 31, the edition lists the *moto di terza discendente ligne 2, exemple 2* as an error; the diminution actually displayed is RS-3descM1A2.

²³ Here is an abridged list of the incorrectly transcribed diminutions (i.e. the *version originale*) in this section of the book alone: RP-5ascM9A1 (p. 30; the rhythm is inaccurate), RS-2ascM2A9 (p. 31; the rhythm is inaccurate), RS-C3A1 (p. 32; the second dash is omitted, which has a direct impact on the proposed correction), RT-4descM2A6 (p. 33, the dash is omitted), RT-4descM9A5 (p. 33, a repeated pitch is added at the end), RT5descM4A5 (p. 33; an extra final note is added), and RQ-M11A3 (p. 34, the final note is incorrectly transcribed).

²⁴ See D. Titan, *The origins of instrumental diminution*, p. 45-50, for a discussion regarding this correction including all other variants of print.

The proposed correction of the handwritten cadence 48 (p. 37) equally raises eyebrows, as the “corrected” version is a perfect reproduction of the cadence as presented in FG-WOLFENBÜTTEL. The authors transcribed this cadence diminution incorrectly (substituting an absolutely clearly notated quaver rest in FG-WOLFENBÜTTEL with a crotchet rest) and proceed to offer a correction that is identical to the source! The correlation between the list of errors and the actual corpus of the handwritten cadences (p. 158-165) is similarly dubious. First of all, the authors fail to identify that Ganassi added a few sharp signs and placed dots under specific notes to indicate *musica ficta*. This valuable information is lost in the modern edition. Secondly, the list of errors is incomplete and, to make matters worse, some of the handwritten diminutions are silently altered.²⁵ Cadences 101 and 124 in FG-WOLFENBÜTTEL exhibit signs of Ganassi’s attempt to correct these diminutions by crossing or blurring out notes. Unfortunately, these corrections are not represented or discussed in the Droz edition. Since many other tacitly modified cadences are indeed perfect reproductions of Peter’s edition, the exact relation between the Droz edition and the original source starts to be rather suspicious.²⁶

Provided one humbly acknowledges the fact that our understanding of *Fontegara* still is precarious, the section titled “Discrepancies” (p. 35-36) is a laudable effort, as it potentially could promote academic discussion and improve our stylistic insight. The list of “discrepancies” contains diminutions that are not per se incorrect in *Fontegara*, but which deserve some attention as they contain, for example, unexpected repeated notes or an initial pitch that does not match the *moto*. Unfortunately, however, the section evinces the same loose approach to the source: both the *version originale* and the *correction proposée* of RP-3ascM11A2 are incorrectly transposed down by a third (p. 35); the authors open a discussion regarding the pitches of RP-3ascM5A1 but neglect other similar examples (RP-3ascM6A1, RP-3ascM8A1 and RP-3ascM9A1); or even, they question the alternative initial note of the diminution in RP-3descM7A1 but offer no discussion on the diminution directly below, RP-3descM8A1, which starts a fifth below its first *moto* note.

The lack of academic rigour and transparency is equally noticeable in the main corpus of diminutions (*Regole*). The abundance and variety of imperfections is quite shocking: several examples of diminutions are reproduced without the original vertical dashes (see RT-2ascM6A1 in example 9),²⁷ whilst other diminutions relative to a semibreve *moto* are printed with creatively added dashes that are not present in any of the extant copies (see RT-2ascM7A1 and RT-2ascM7A3 in example 9). The transcription of rests equally suffers from the lack of attention to detail. In RP-2ascM8A8 (p. 75), two crotchet rests are conflated into one minim rest, disguising the playful variation in the use of rests (as exemplified by the two adjacent

²⁵ See, for example, cadences 19, 57, 159, and 163 (this last cadence contain two modifications in the Droz edition).

²⁶ See, for example, cadences 33, 40, 44, 60, 79, 121, 166 and 169. Note that in cadences 79 and 121, Peter makes her editorial choices visible by adding brackets to the added notes, whereas in the Droz edition the reader is left unaware. In fact, cadence 169 is absolutely correct in FG-WOLFENBÜTTEL, so there is no reason for the rhythmic alteration in these two modern editions.

²⁷ See for, example, RS-2descM6A7 (p. 97), RS-C3A1 (p. 110), RS-C5A1 (p. 110), RT-2ascM6A1 (p. 114), RQ-M11A1 (p. 136).

diminutions RP-2ascM7A8 and RP-2ascM9A8). It is perhaps no surprise then to discover a semiquaver rest in Dongois' diminution of Verdelot's madrigal *Italia mia* (p. 230, bar 65), even though Ganassi never applied one single semiquaver rest in *Fontegara*.²⁸

Example 9



RT-2ascM6A1 (original dash not transcribed) and RT-M7A1 and A3 (added dashes not contained in the original source)

Perhaps even more troublesome in this respect is the fact that numerous examples of diminutions are tacitly modified in the reproduction of the *Regole* (in other words, these diminutions are neither discussed in the list of “Errors and discrepancies” nor are the alterations annotated or made explicit). Hence, the modern user of the edition is totally unaware that these examples are, in fact, corrupted versions of the original source. The palette of modifications ranges from altered rhythmic design and diminutions that are incorrectly transposed to wrongly transcribed melodic contour.²⁹ Again, among these tacitly modified diminutions one encounters many examples that are perfect (or near perfect) replicas of Peter's edition.³⁰ When such an inexplicit modification unnecessarily corrupts a diminution that is perfect in *Fontegara*, the boundaries of editorial integrity are certainly overstepped (see example 10).³¹

²⁸ Dongois applies here RS-3ascM7A6 (transposed down), perhaps following the incorrect transcription of Hildemarie Peter, which indeed contains a semiquaver rest. Curiously, the Droz edition presents this diminution correctly (p. 99).

²⁹ See, for example, the altered rhythmic design of RS-3ascM1A3 (p. 98) and the incorrect transposition of RS-4descM3A8 (p. 105). In RS-2descM2A6 (p. 97) the perfect melodic symmetry between the two halves of the diminution disappears in the Droz edition. For other variants of wrongly transcribed melodic contour, see RS-2ascM8A3, RS-4descM1A4 (respectively on p. 94 and 104).

³⁰ See RS-4descM5A6 (p. 105), RS-5ascM8A2 (p. 106), RS-5ascM9A2 (p. 106), RS-C7A4 (p. 111), RS-C10A2 (p. 110). Note that RS-C8A1 and A2 are presented in inverted order in the Droz edition (p. 110).

³¹ Note that Peter alters the rhythm at the start of the diminution (p. 57), creating a sharp syncopation, and adds a prolonged *groppetto*-like figuration at the end of the embellishment (her version contains the equivalent of nine crotchet beats). The Droz edition borrows the rhythmic layout but corrects the *groppetto* ending (p. 111).

Example 10



RS-C7A4

The examples mentioned above are exclusively extracted from *Regola seconda* and, therefore, only constitute a partial list. A very similar picture emerges from a closer examination of the other *Regole* in the Droz edition.

Considering the nature and the quantity of all deficiencies, one can only conclude that the new practical edition falls substantially short of its goals, as it is both unsuitable for any academic discussion of Ganassi's *Fontegara* and an inappropriate tool to access this important Renaissance source. As such, this edition is a very unfortunate missed opportunity to promote and stimulate a reintroduction of Ganassi's musical style into the realms of historically informed performance practice. Therefore, despite of the authors' questionable statement that *Fontegara* is exclusively accessible for those "rare few who can make do with facsimiles" (p. 17), it is indeed better to follow their advice and take advantage of the "option of consulting the original text" (p. 23). Luckily for all of us, it is possible to study this unique source in its purest form as most of the extant copies have already been digitalised and are easily accessible.³²

Dina Titan

³² As previously mentioned, the Vossart edition is a satisfactory alternative for the French speaking public.

