



MUSICA E CULTURA NELLA PADOVA DI PIETRO BEMBO

A CURA DI CRISTINA CASSIA

LIBRERIA MUSICALE ITALIANA

Studi e Saggi



· 57 ·

La realizzazione di questo volume è parte di un progetto che è stato finanziato dal programma di ricerca e innovazione Horizon 2020 dell'Unione Europea con il Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 101025775



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI PADOVA

dbc
DIPARTIMENTO
DEI BENI CULTURALI
ARCHEOLOGIA, STORIA
DELL'ARTE, DEL CINEMA
E DELLA MUSICA

In copertina: Loggia e Odeo Cornaro, particolare (stemma di Bembo). Su concessione del Comune di Padova; tutti i diritti di legge riservati.

2023 Libreria Musicale Italiana srl, via di Arsina 296/f, 55100 Lucca

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Pubblicazione in formato pdf in Open Access aderente alla licenza CC BY
ISBN 978-88-5543-303-7

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«IMITAR IL PARLAR»
AND THE «QUESTIONE DELLA LINGUA»
IN SILVESTRO GANASSI'S *Fontegara*

Any attempt to draw connections between the writings of the sixteenth-century instrumentalist Silvestro Ganassi and those of Cardinal Pietro Bembo might, at first sight, seem somewhat farfetched. The very nature of the writings of these authors is testimony of their primary and fairly distinct realm of cultural activity: literary and musical. In addition to that, Ganassi's employment as an instrumentalist of the Venetian *Signoria* seems rather ordinary in comparison to Bembo's prominent social and cultural status. Although Ganassi's oeuvre is certainly impressive in regards to the insight it offers on a highly demanding instrumental practice and for the somewhat surprising recurrent references to other artistic disciplines, it is first and foremost the output of a practitioner. His treatises are the product of a virtuoso musician who cleverly employs the emergent printing business to promote a new social and artistic valorisation of instrumentalists and instrumental music.¹ On the other hand, Ganassi and Bembo were both active in Venice during the first half of the sixteenth century and, although no sound evidence can be offered at this point, it is entirely plausible that they met as a result of their professional activities and overlapping social milieu.² The recent documented biography of Ganassi even

1. For a more in-depth account of the corpus of interdisciplinary references in Silvestro Ganassi's three instrumental treatises (*Opera intitulata Fontegara*, Silvestro Ganassi, Venezia 1535; *Regola rubertina*, Silvestro Ganassi, Venezia 1542; *Lettione seconda*, Silvestro Ganassi, Venezia 1543) as means of artistic self-fashioning, see DINA TITAN, *The Origins of Instrumental Diminution in Renaissance Venice: Ganassi's Fontegara*, Ph.D. diss., University of Utrecht 2019, pp. 135–91. For a discussion on the printing of *Fontegara* see DINA TITAN, *The Printing of Silvestro Ganassi's Fontegara: A Comparative Survey of the Extant Copies*, «Recercare», xxxiv 2022, pp. 13–59.

2. The study of Ganassi's social milieu indicates that he was in contact with various artists and musicians active in Venice. Firstly, the dedicatees of his treatises, Andrea Gritti, Ruberto Strozzi and Neri Capponi, were prominent patrons of the arts. The corpus of references to famous musicians and the inclusion of madrigals composed by others in Ganassi's treatises allows for a broader sketch of his artistic milieu (i.e. Adrian Willaert, Nicolas Gombert,

brings a family bond between the two Venetian men to the fore: Ganassi's second wife, Urania, was the daughter of a less prosperous member of the prominent family, Giovanni Bembo.³ Furthermore, the extant copy of *Fontegara* preserved in the Herzog August Bibliothek of Wolfenbüttel contains a handwritten note by Ganassi addressed to a certain *Messer Domenico*, for whom Ganassi had hoped to write three-hundred cadences on one single *soggetto*.⁴ Di Pasquale suggests that Domenico was Silvestro Ganassi's brother-in-law, brother of Urania and son of Giovanni Bembo.⁵

Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, several treatises on diminution and instrumental technique refer to imitation of human voice as a benchmark criterion for performance practice, apparently establishing a hierarchical relationship between vocal and instrumental performance. These references have often been interpreted as a performative advice for instrumentalists to follow the model of singers. As handy as these generalisations might be for gaining a wider historical perspective on ever-changing musical traditions, at the same time they are fairly risky, due to the tendency to overlook the nuanced and fluid meaning that specific terminology, such as «imitare la voce humana», might have at different moments in time. As will become clear, the «imitation of human voice» in *Fontegara* touches upon certain topics that seem to either have fallen into disuse in later diminution treatises or have changed in significance.

The uniqueness of Ganassi's treatise could be partially explained by the fact that it stands chronologically isolated. Its next Venetian counterpart, Girolamo

Francesco da Milano, Giuliano Tiburtino, Ludovico Lasagnino, Alfonso da Ferrara, Giovanni Battista Sansone («il Siciliano»), Rubertino Mantovano, and, finally, the madrigal composers Jhan Gero and Giacomo Fogliano). The references by other authors to Ganassi are equally informative. The instrumentalist is mentioned in the works of Ludovico Dolce, Paolo Pino, Filippo Oriolo da Bassano, Teofilo Folengo, Francesco Sansovino and even Pietro Aretino. See also BONNIE J. BLACKBURN, *Myself When Young: Becoming a Musician in Renaissance Italy – or Not*, «Proceedings of the British Academy», CLXXXI 2012, pp. 169–203, footnote 20, for reference to a possible encounter between Ganassi and Titian. See TITAN, *The Origins of Instrumental Diminution*, pp. 135–63, for a more detailed account of Ganassi's social milieu.

3. MARCO DI PASQUALE, *Silvestro Ganassi: A Documented Biography*, «Recercare», XXXI/1–2 2019, pp. 29–102. Di Pasquale offers archival evidence of the fact that Ganassi's second wife, Urania, was «a natural daughter of Giovanni Bembo (1473–1545), the descendant of a secondary, and less prosperous, branch of the powerful Venetian family». Giovanni appears to have received a «good humanistic education», before making his way to Corfù where, apart from commercial activities, he also «perfected the study of Greek». For this quote, see DI PASQUALE, *Silvestro Ganassi*, pp. 45–6.

4. The volume contains one-hundred and seventy-five cadences.

5. See DI PASQUALE, *Silvestro Ganassi*, p. 73.

Dalla Casa's *Il vero modo di diminuir*, was only printed nearly fifty years later.⁶ However, it is first and foremost its musical style that distinguishes *Fontegara* from later publications. Due to its unparalleled rhythmical complexity and systematic use of proportions, Ganassi's style has long posed serious obstacles for modern musicians interested in historically-informed performance practice. *Fontegara* also features diminutions which, contrary to the general understanding of these embellishments as a fast-moving, melodical ornamentation, solely exhibit a purely rhythmical rendering of the original interval. Often overlooked, but most important for the present discussion is the specific significance that Ganassi gives to imitation of the human voice: «imitar il parlar». Ganassi proclaims that instrumentalists must be aware that «all musical instruments are less dignified in relation and comparison to the human voice; therefore, we will strive to learn from it and to imitate it». In a fictitious dialogue-like conversation, a doubting interlocutor poses the obvious question: «how could it be possible that one could claim that such an object [i.e. recorder] would produce the utterings of speech?» Ganassi responds by comparing a painter's ability to imitate the various colours existent in nature to a recorder player's ability to imitate the human voice through the proportion of the breath and occlusion of the tongue. Ganassi boasts about his extensive experience in this matter, claiming to have heard musicians who could «make words understood» through their playing. Most importantly, he places «imitar il parlar» as the core objective of his entire treatise, and not as a mere

6. The diminution treatises, in chronological order, are: GANASSI, *Fontegara*; DIEGO ORTIZ, *El primo libro [...] nel qual si tratta delle glose sopra le cadenze et altre sorte de punti in la musica del violone*, Valerio Dorico, Roma 1553; GIROLAMO DALLA CASA, *Il vero modo di diminuir con tutte le sorti di stromenti di fiato, et corda, et di voce humana. Libro primo*, Angelo Gardano, Venezia 1584; GIOVANNI BASSANO, *Ricercate, passaggi et cadentie per potersi essercitar nel diminuir terminatamente con ogni sorte d'istrumento*, Giacomo Vincenti, Venezia 1585; GIOVANNI BASSANO, *Motetti, madrigali et canzone francese [...] diminuiti per sonar con ogni sorte di stromenti*, Giacomo Vincenti, Venezia 1591; GIOVANNI LUCA CONFORTI, *Breve et facile maniera d'essercitarsi ad ogni scolaro non solamente a far passaggi [...] ma ancora per potere da sé senza maestri scrivere ogni opera*, Roma 1593; RICCARDO ROGNONI, *Passaggi per potersi essercitare nel diminuire terminatamente con ogni sorte d'instromenti*, Giacomo Vincenti, Venezia 1592; GIOVANNI BATTISTA BOVICELLI, *Regole, passaggi di musica, madrigali et motetti passeggiati*, Giacomo Vincenti, Venezia 1594; FRANCESCO ROGNONI, *Selva de varii passaggi*, Filippo Lomazzo, Milano 1620; GIOVANNI SPADI DA FAENZA, *Libro di passaggi ascendenti et descendenti*, Alessandro Vincenti, Venezia 1624. Two other sources of diminution tradition were not printed, but are relevant to our understanding of the musical style: GIOVANNI CAMILLO MAFFEI, *Delle lettere del signor Gio. Camillo Maffei*, Raymundo Amato, Napoli 1562, and AURELIO VIRGILIANO, *Il Dolcimelo* (in manuscript, ca. 1601).

instruction to performance.⁷ Obviously, at this point, one is left to wonder what Ganassi actually meant, and in what way the treatise as a whole, including its unusual diminutions, could fulfil the proposed aim: imitation of speech. The crucial element here is that Ganassi does not establish a comparison to the flexibility of a vocal performance, as his reference is to «parlar» rather than «cantar».

Although it falls somewhat outside of the scope of the present article, it is yet of great relevance to note that Ganassi's rhythmically complex diminutions are, in fact, the result of his close adherence to the poetic principles of «rhyth-mopoiia» in emulation of two ancient Greek treatises that were brought to Venice due to the Bessarion's Act of Donation: Aristoxenus' *Elementa rhythmica* and Aristides Quintilianus' *De musica*.⁸ Ganassi meticulously follows the rhythmic criteria applicable to ancient prosody, applying them to craft his rhythmically varied and complex ornaments. Ganassi's imitation of speech and of the human voice transcends mere practical instructions. It is best interpreted as a compositional principle and an intrinsic element of style, permeating each of the diminution examples. In that sense, the 'parlando'-like quality of his purely rhythmic diminutions is perhaps best understood as the purest expression of the Greek poetic parameters in *Fontegara*. They simply embellish basic intervals through an exclusively rhythmic rendering of their pitches

7. The original text reads: «Voi havete a sapere co[m]e tutti li instrumenti musicali sono rispetto & co[m]paratione ala voce humana ma[n]cho degni p[er] tanto noi si afforzeremo da q[ue]lla i[m]parare & imitarla: onde tu potresti dire co[m]e sara possibile conciosia cosa che essa proferisce ogni parlare dil che no[n] credo che ditto flauto mai sia simile ad essa humana voce & io te rispondo che cosi come il degno & p[er]fetto dipintor imita ogni cosa creata ala natura con la variation di colori cosi con tale instrumento di fiato & corde potrai imitare el proferire che fa la humana voce [...] lo instrume[n]to imitera il proferir della humana voce co[n] la proportion del fiato & offuscation della lingua con lo agiuto de deti & di q[ue]sto ne o fatto esperie[n]tia & audito da altri sonatori farsi inte[n]dere co[n] il suo sonar le p[ar]ole di essa cosa che si poteva be[n] dire a q[ue]llo instr[ument]o no[n] ma[n]carli altro che la forma dil corpo humano si co[m]e si dice ala pintura be[n] fatta no[n] ma[n]carli solu[m] il fiato: si che haveti a essere certi del suo termine p[er] dite rason de poter imitar il p[ar]lar». For a complete transcription of the original text presented in parallel with an English translation see TITAN, *The Origins of Instrumental Diminution*, Annexe I, pp. I–CVII.

8. The subject and scope of the present article does not allow for an in-depth discussion on the principles applied by Ganassi to meticulously construct his musical style according to the parameters borrowed from two ancient Greek sources available in Venice at the time. See TITAN, *The Origins of Instrumental Diminution*, pp. 84–134 and 193–260. For translations of the original ancient sources see ARISTOXENUS, *Elementa rhythmica*, ed. by Lionel Pearson, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1990, and ARISTIDES QUINTILIANUS, *On Music*, in three books: translation, with introduction, commentary and annotations, ed. by Thomas Mathiesen, Yale University Press, New Haven-London 1983.

(even including rests). These purely rhythmic diminutions are quite detached from the extremely volatile melodic embellishments that are so typical for the diminution treatises from the turn of the sixteenth-century. The examples below grant a glimpse on Ganassi's varied treatment of the accepted subdivisions of paeonic (five time-lengths), sesquialterean (six time-lengths) and epitritic feet (seven time-lengths) as described in the ancient Greek sources.

Regola Seconda



RS-2ascM1A8 – [3:2]



RS-2ascM2A8 – [1:1], subdivision [3:2-2:3]



RS-2ascM1A9 – [3:2]



RS-2ascM1A10 – [1:1], subdivision [3:2-2:3]

Regola Terza



RT-2ascM8A4 – [1:1]⁶⁹⁸

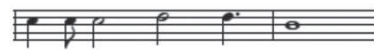


RT-2ascM8A5 – [1:1]



RT-2descM4A5 – [1:1]

Regola Quarta



RQ-M9A4 – [1:1], subdivision [3:4-4:3]



RQ-M12A4 – [1:1], subdivision [4:3-3:4]

Fig. 1: Examples of purely rhythmic diminutions in *Fontegara*⁹

9. The codification system applied here aims to facilitate the identification of individual diminution examples taken from *Fontegara*, presenting all required information in the following order: «regola», interval descriptor, «moto» and «atto». The «regole» are indicated by their respective abbreviations: RP, RS, RT and RQ (respectively, «Regola prima», «Regola seconda», «Regola terza» and «Regola quarta»). The interval descriptors appear in an abridged form, for example, 2asc represents «seconda ascendente» and 2desc indicates «seconda descendente». These are followed by the individual «moto» (which are numbered in vertical orientation on the left-hand side of the page openings of *Fontegara*) and, finally, by the precise diminution example, i.e. «atto» (numbered in a horizontal orientation across the page openings). For example: RS-3descM2A6 refers to «Regola seconda», interval of the descending third number two, diminution example number six (which is the first diminution on the top left of the fol. Hii recto). The musical examples presented here are directly taken from my Ph.D. dissertation. See TITAN, *The Origins of Instrumental Diminution*, p. 254.

One must realise that Ganassi's imitation of the human voice refers to a poetic language that had little in common with an everyday conversational tone.¹⁰ Ganassi's intimate connection to the «fuoriusciti» Ruberto Strozzi and Neri Capponi, both eager patrons and collectors of madrigals, might have contributed to his interest in language as a central parameter for music matters.¹¹ Moreover, the fact that the Bessarion collection, including the two relevant ancient sources mentioned above, fell under the librarian care of Pietro Bembo from 1530 onward also sheds light on how Ganassi might have come in contact with the works of Aristoxenus and Aristides Quintilianus.

Leaving Ganassi's musical style aside, the present article approaches the discussion regarding the imitation of human voice from an alternative viewpoint, focussing on an instrument-technical aspect: Ganassi's in-depth presentation of articulations and of the movements of the tongue. The «questione della lingua» in the title of this article (pun intended) seemingly alludes to two entirely different cultural universes: the poetic language as discussed by Bembo, on the one hand, and Ganassi's presentation of instrumental articulations, on the other. Could there perhaps be any correlation between them?

Instrumental articulation: Ganassi's teachings on the movements of the tongue

An understanding of Ganassi's presentation of instrumental articulations must take his reference to the imitation of the human voice or imitation of speech into account. The discussion in *Fontegara* regarding the several variants of movements of the tongue is painstakingly detailed, evincing Ganassi's tendency to present topics in a categorised manner.¹² He surveys the several movements of the tongue from a phonetic viewpoint, giving recurrent attention to their resulting emotive effects on the listener. The sheer fact that *Fontegara* contains four chapters about instrumental articulation is already

10. I would like to thank Cristina Cassia and Massimo Privitera for the stimulating discussions and their comments after the presentation of this paper during the Giornata di Studi *Music and Culture in Pietro Bembo's Padua*, Padua, 28 October 2022.

11. On linguistic matters and the origins of the madrigal, see DEAN MACE, *Pietro Bembo and the Literary Origins of the Italian Madrigal*, «Musical Quarterly», LV 1969, pp. 65–86. In regards to the madrigal patronage of Ruberto Strozzi see RICHARD AGEE, *Ruberto Strozzi and the Early Madrigal*, «Journal of the American Musicological Society», XXXVI/1 1983, pp. 1–17, and MARTHA FELDMAN, *City Culture and the Madrigal at Venice*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1995, pp. 24–46.

12. For example, the same meticulous approach is applied to his fingering tables (chapters 3 and 4 and again 25) and to the categories of diminutions introduced in chapters 9 to 12.

noteworthy in itself.¹³ The underlying question here is whether Ganassi's distinct classification of the movements of the tongue in *Fontegara* should be solely interpreted as a reflection of the practical character of the treatise and, therefore, as a mere description of a technical aspect of instrumental practice or if there is, perhaps, another explanation. Precisely how could these articulations function as contributing factors to the successful achievement of *Fontegara*'s main goal, «imitar il parlar»?

At various instances in *Fontegara*, Ganassi directly links instrument-technical matters to the achievement of a desirable performative quality. In his initial presentation of the three main requirements of recorder technique (airflow, agility of the hand and movements of the tongue), for instance, Ganassi indicates that airflow and dynamics serve as means to emulate the varied emotive effects of a singer's pronunciation. He refers to the varied pronunciation of words but, interestingly, does not connect it to its nearest instrumental-technical equivalent, the movements of the tongue. Instead, he establishes a direct comparison between the way vocalists may vary their pronunciation of the words as a response to their contextual meaning and a recorder player's varied airflow and dynamic contrasts.

This instrument, called the recorder, requires three things: first, the breath, second, the hand and [in] third [place], the tongue. In what relates to the breath, the human voice is like a mistress that teaches where to proceed in a moderate manner; because when the singer sings a certain [musical] composition with soothing words, he makes his pronunciation soothing; if [the words are] joyful, he [similarly carries on] in a joyful manner. Hence, if you would wish to imitate such an effect, then you should proceed with a moderate breath, so that, in the due moments, you may alter it by either augmenting or diminishing [the airflow].¹⁴

13. Most authors of later diminution treatises deal with the subject of articulation in a much more abridged form. For example, Dalla Casa's discussion on tonguing is limited to three short paragraphs, comparable to what Ganassi discusses in chapter 5 alone.

14. See GANASSI, *Fontegara*, chapter 2, and TITAN, *The Origins of Instrumental Diminution*, Annexe 1, pp. XII–XIII. The original text reads: «Questo instrume[n]to nominato flauto richiede tre cose prima el fiato seconda la mano terza la lingua qua[n]to al fiato la voce humana co[m]e magistra ne insegna dover essere p[ro]ceduto mediocralmente p[er]che quando il ca[n]tor ca[n]ta alcuna co[m]position co[n] parole placabile lui fa la p[ro]nu[n]cia placabile se gioco[n]da & lui co[n] il mo[do] gioco[n]do p[er]o volendo imitar si[mi]le effetto si p[ro]ciedera il fiato mediocre accio si possa crescere e minuir ali sui te[m]pi». A quite similar statement appears in DALLA CASA, *Il vero modo di diminuir*. The *cornetto* is praised above other instruments for its ability to imitate the human due to its greater range of dynamic variation. In fact, in many aspects of his technical presentation Dalla Casa seems to follow the

In order to fully grasp the nuanced meaning of «imitar il parlar», we need to direct our attention to the chapters that examine the third element: the movements of the tongue. Ganassi outlines matters such as the place of occlusion and the various degrees of interruption of the air stream, the effect of different consonants, the presence and absence of the various vowels and, finally, the effect that the speed of performance might have on the quality of the pronounced syllables.

Chapter 5 sets the tone by introducing the so-called three original types of movements of the tongue. Ganassi states these are essentially formed by two syllables, and that their effects range from two «extremes as well as their mean». Whereas the first original tonguing («te-che») creates a crude and harsh effect («crudo & aspro»), the third one («le-re») is qualified as pleasing and delicate («piacevole over plane»). The second articulation is «mediocre», because it literally assembles individual elements taken from the other two tongueings («te-re»). The description gains a semi-moral tone: the «mediocre» quality of the second articulation is, literally and figuratively, the tempered mean that is found in between the two extremes, i.e. the well-balanced combination of harshness and tenderness.

The first [movement of the tongue], for example, is formed by these two syllables te-che, te-che, te-che; the second, te-re, te-re, te-re, te; and the third, le-re, le-re, le-re, le. You should also know that these three original movements contain in themselves the [two] extremes as well as their mean. For it is true to say that the first articulation, the so-called first original movement, proceeds through [the use of] syllables that cause a crude and harsh effect; the third movement of the mentioned original [tonguings], [constitutes of] pleasant and delicate syllables. Their mean is the movement of the second original tonguing, which moves in the following manner: tere tere tere te. Note that this is a median movement, for it contains the other two in itself: the first syllable of the first original movement and, for its second syllable,

presentation of the movements of the tongue in *Fontegara*, but it is clear that «imitar la voce humana» no longer functions as the core objective of the treatise (and there is no reference to «imitar il parlar»). See GIROLAMO DALLA CASA, *Il vero modo di diminuir con tutte le sorti di stromenti*, facsimile, Forni Editore, Bologna 1996 (Bibliotheca Musica Bononiensis, Ser. II, 23). The quote reads: «degli Stromenti di fiato il piu eccellente è il Cornetto per imitar la voce humana piu de gli altri stromenti. Questo stromento si adopera piano, & forte & in ogni sorte di Tuono, si come fa la voce». Dalla Casa adds that a good instrument, good tongue and few good-quality diminutions also contribute to the imitation of the human voice.

the second [syllable] of the third original [tonguing] thus, containing in itself the temperance of both extremes, i.e. the harshness and the tenderness.¹⁵

In this section, Ganassi refers to arguments borrowed from the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean, in which moral virtue is described as a state of character concerned with the choice between two extremes, and lying in the mean. Aristotle discusses the mean as «a proper, just-right point between excess and defect, being subject to individual and balanced choices that reflect purpose. It is not an arithmetical mean but a mean relative to the individual. [...] it depends on the person and on the purpose. Aristotle compares the mean rather to the idea of proportion in art».¹⁶ Similarly, in *Fontegara*, the focus falls on the decision-making process. It is up to the musician to make the adequate, just-right choice regarding which type of tonguing is needed to express emotional content (either textual or musical). Led by one's inner sense of beauty, balance and moral virtues, each individual is entrusted with the ability to make appropriate choices. The performer who aims at the imitation of the affective powers of the words in music will be able to make balanced and adequate choices, following his inner sense of beauty and virtue.¹⁷

15. The original text reads: «Il primo si e in essemplio queste due sillabe te che. te che te che. Il secondo tere tere tere te. Et in terzo lere lere lere le. Et sapi che questi tre moti originale contiene in si li estremi co[n] il suo mezzo. Che sia il vero il primo p[ro]ferire dil moto primo originale prociede per sillabe che causano effetto crudo & aspro: & il moto terzo de ditte originale per sillabe piacevole over plane: & il mezzo suo sie il moto de la seco[n]da originale ilquale move in qgesto modo. tere tere tere te & chel sia moto mediocre tu vedi chel co[n]tiene in si due: silabe la pri[m]a del pri[m]o moto originale la seco[n]da della seconda del moto terzo originale pero viene havere il temperame[n]to di q[ue]sti dui estremi cioe de durezza e tenerezza». The translation appears here as presented in TITAN, *The Origins of Instrumental Diminution*, Annexe I, p. XXIX.

16. See ABRAHAM EDEL, *Aristotle and his Philosophy*, Routledge, Chapel Hill 1996, p. 266. Edel offers a comprehensive discussion of Aristotle's concept of the virtuous mean on pp. 252–80. According to his explanation «Virtues are not simply emotions such as desire, anger, fear and confidence. [...] The emotions are part of the raw material to be fashioned into virtues. [...] Virtue is thus a regulative form in which emotions and actions are patterned. Perhaps a virtue may be regarded as a first entelechy, like a language that has been learned or a skill that is mastered. There are definite conditions for virtuous action: the agent must act from knowledge, he must choose the acts for their own sake, and the acts must issue from a firm and unchangeable character». See PETER LOISIN, *Aristotle's Doctrine of the Mean*, «History of Philosophy Quarterly», IV 1987, pp. 329–42, for complementary information on the doctrine of the mean.

17. See TITAN, *The Origins of Instrumental Diminution*, pp. 172–3, and for information regarding why the doctrine of the mean would appeal to Ganassi's Venetian morals, as virtues

Chapter 6 deals with the varied effects of the original tonguings, additionally classified as being either complete or incomplete, i.e. halved («compiuta», «non compiuta cioè mezza»). Ganassi's explanation is clear: the three original tonguings are complete, because they contain two syllables. Consequently, the incomplete or halved articulations only contain one syllable or letter. Surprisingly, Ganassi also describes the possibility to exchange vowels («ta, te, ti, to, tu, ca, che, chi, cho, cu & altri modi»), and adds that if performed faster, these articulations will be reduced to single consonants (e.g. «ttt» or «ddd»¹⁸). In the same chapter, Ganassi states that the first original tonguing is of a «dretta» nature («direct»), whereas the third one is «riversa» («reversed»)¹⁹. These categories do not introduce new movements of the tongue aside from three fundamental ones and their complete or incomplete variants, but simply offer additional (phonetical) information about them. An articulation is to be qualified as «riversa» if the syllables are less pronounced, in other words, when there is a lighter degree of occlusion of the airstream, whereas the «dretta» features more articulated or pronounced syllables. Curiously, Ganassi points out that an articulation typically classified as «lingua dretta» might become «riversa» when performed faster, as the pronunciation would necessarily be weakened due to the lesser degree of occlusion of the tongue.

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

such as decorum, moderation and balance would fit his forging of a well-balanced image of the musician, see p. 256.

18. This section is erroneously translated in the latest practical edition of *Fontegara*, fabricating an entirely new category of articulation (half-complete). For a detailed discussion of this edition, see the DINA TITAN, *Review: Silvestro Ganassi, Opera intitolata Fontegara*, ed. William Dongois and Philippe Canguilhem, «Revue belge de Musicologie», LXXV 2021, pp. 220–34, and for the discussion on this particular erroneous translation, see pp. 221–2. See also, SILVESTRO GANASSI, *Opera intitolata Fontegara*, ed. by William Dongois and Philippe Canguilhem, Droz, Geneva 2021, p. 62.

19. Note that the terminologies «dretta» and «riversa» also appear in Dalla Casa's treatise but it is clear that the specific significance differs from Ganassi's. In *Il vero modo di diminuir*, Dalla Casa first introduces three variants of «lingua riversa» or «di gorgia», qualifying them by their extreme speed and varied effects (i.e. «ler-ler», «der-der» and «ter-ter» described, respectively, as «dolce», «mediocre» and «crudo»). The following variant, «lingua dretta» («te-re»), is described for its occlusion point (near the teeth) and for the fact it is most suitable for slower-moving ornaments displaying *crome* and *semicrome*. Finally, the third variant («te-che») is described as a very crude variant, therefore, used by those who want to create «terribilità». On the following pages of his treatise, Dalla Casa even presents musical examples with an advice on which tonguings could be used for practising each of them.

halved [tonguing will be composed of] only one syllable or letter so this way, with the speed [of performance, it becomes]: ttttt or ddddd. 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. Furthermore, we can also label these tonguings as direct or reverse. The direct tonguing is the one in which the syllables are more articulated, just as it is the case of the first original tonguing. The reversed [tonguing] will be the one in which the syllables are pronounced in a feeble manner, as exemplified by the third original [tonguing]. But it is the truth that [when one increases] its speed, the pronunciation of [the tonguings] weakens, and therefore, it will [then] be qualified as reversed [tonguing].²⁰

Chapter 7 visually arranges the fundamental articulations and the other possible variants in three columns, making the criterion of categorisation explicit and allowing for alternative combinations of syllables, provided the essential phonetical qualities of each column are respected. The individual syllables are either classified as occlusives («te», «de» or «che») or liquids («le» and «re»). Their harsher or milder nature is a direct consequence of the degree and position of the occlusion of the tongue. The three columns demonstrate, respectively, the various combinations of two occlusive syllables, one occlusive and one liquid syllable and, finally, of two liquid ones. Ganassi’s analytical approach offers a condensed glimpse on several variants of articulations that may create the effects he initially described as «crudo & aspro», «mediocre» or «piacevole & plane».

20. Ganassi’s text reads: «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 loriginale: la mezza de una sillaba over litera i[n] questo modo co[n] velocita .ttttt. over ddddd: & 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: & anchora causa uno nome de lingua chiamata dretta & riversa la drita sie q[ue]lla che piu p[ro]ferisse le silabe como e la prima delle originale: & la roversa sera q[ue]lla che mancho proferira le silabe como e la terza originale: & chel sia la verita dop[er]andose co[n] la sua velocita p[er]de il suo p[ro]ferire per ta[n]to se adima[n]dara riversa». The translation is mine.

Teche teche teche teche teche.	Tere tere tere tere tere.	Lere lere lere lere lere.
Tacha teche tichi tocho tuchu.	Tara tere tiri toro turu.	Lara lere liri loro luru.
Dacha decche dichi docho duchu.	Dara dare dari daro daru.	
Chara chare chari charo charu.		

Nota come io procedo da le lettere uocale accioche possi inuistichar quala silaba ouer litera la natura ti habia dotado di esprimere tal che con piu uelocita pcededo cō q̃sto ordine deponendoti li tre mo ti originali e poi a moto p moto io distendero li sui uarii effetti da essi deriuati; cioe in questo modo Teche teche teche teche teche. Tere tere tere tere tere. Lere lere lere lere lere. Era piu modi Tacha teche tichi tocho tuchu. Tara tere tiri toro turu. Lara lere liri loro luru. che non scri dacha decche dichi docho duchu. dara daredari daro daru. uo secondo che la natura hopera il ter chara chare chari charo charu.

Fig. 2: Silvestro Ganassi, *Fontegara*, Venezia 1535, chapter 7.²¹

Ganassi's decision to include all five vowels as an integral part of the articulation syllables is rather peculiar and not fully explained, as there is no clear description of their sonorous effect. Although the variation of vowels appears in the prose of chapters 6 and 7, and in the content of the three columns in chapter 7, the only practical advice Ganassi provides to the reader is to experiment and investigate which syllables come most naturally to each individual in order to facilitate speedy performance. It is noteworthy that throughout the treatise, Ganassi often expresses his trust in the empirical method for diverse artistic matters, relying on practical experimentation and professional experience (this is, in fact, another clear trace of Aristoxenus' influence).²² In chap-

21. The image is published here by permission of the Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome, MiC (shelfmark M XIII 115).

22. On Aristoxenus' empirical approach and its importance for sixteenth-century instrumentalists see CLAUDE PALISCA, *Aristoxenus Redeemed in the Renaissance*, «Revista de Musicología», XVI/3, 1993, pp. 1283–93. See GANASSI, *Fontegara*, chapter 4, GANASSI, *Regola rubertina*, chapter 7, and TITAN, *The Origins of Instrumental Diminution*, pp. 135–51, 199–202 and 260–72, on the influence of Aristoxenus on Ganassi's valorisation of the instrumentalists' sense perception. Following Aristoxenus' line of thought, typically when discussing matters of intonation, Ganassi gives credit to the musician's sense perception and «giudicio dell'orecchia». See, for example, his discussion about the 'newly discovered' extreme high notes or even, on how to tune viols of those less able instrument makers. Ganassi grants great value to practical, empirical methods as means to promote a new image of instrumentalists. It is noteworthy that, in his writings, he re-states a proverbial-like motto five times, «Dove manca la natura bisogna l'arte sia maestra», pointing to the musicians' ability to surpass nature. This motto nearly always appears in the sections of his treatises in which Ganassi discusses matters

ter 7, Ganassi returns to his categories «dretta» and «riversa», now making a comparison between the two individual syllables of a single fundamental articulation. He states that the first syllable should be qualified as «dretta» and the second syllable as «riversa».²³

In the final chapter dealing with the movements of the tongue (chapter 8), Ganassi offers yet further phonetical information, classifying all «lingua dretta» as «di testa» (i.e. «frontal»), because the occlusion and accumulation of the air happens below the (hard) palate and nearby the teeth. Consequently, all «riversa» articulations are of a guttural nature («di gorza») because the air accumulates further back in the mouth. Furthermore, in this chapter Ganassi mentions one other, special type of tonguing that does not pronounce any syllable at all, but the description is somewhat cryptical. In line with the title of this chapter, which refers to exhaling the air «per comodo della lingua», Ganassi is pointing to the fact that this articulation is of a 'frontal' nature simply because the air occupies the space adjacent to the lips (perhaps close to what nowadays is understood as *legato* or slurred notes), instead of describing another movement of the tongue.²⁴ As is clear from the survey above, Ganassi's account of articulation extends beyond the level of information needed for a (beginning) pupil to engage in practice.

Ganassi's emulation of ancient Greek sources

Before addressing the question whether this detailed description of the movements of the tongue is somehow linked to Ganassi's focus on imitation of speech, it is relevant to emphasise that the two above-mentioned ancient Greek musical sources are closely interrelated because much of the content of *Elementa rhythmica* that deals with the rhythmical arrangement of poetic feet is somewhat paraphrased in the later source.²⁵ Despite the fact that *De musica*

of intonation, clearly moving away from the mathematical ratios as governing principle for intonation and giving greater credit to practical experience.

23. In chapter 6, the entire first fundamental tonguing, «te-che», is qualified as «dretta» because it is more articulated; the third fundamental tonguing, le-re, is thus «riversa». A slight shift takes place in chapter 7 as these categories now are applied to individual syllables. Here, one gets a clear sense that the «direct» and «reverse» quality of these articulations is also defined by the place in the mouth where tongue interrupts the airflow.

24. These references to the tongue have been misinterpreted by a few modern musicians as if Ganassi would be describing an articulation in which the tongue must move in between the lips.

25. For information on these sources see LEWIS ROWELL, *Aristoxenus on Rhythm*, «Journal of Music Theory», XXIII/11979 pp. 63–79, QUINTILIANUS, *On Music*, pp. 94–103 and

contains an extensive section on metrics that is wanting in the fragmentary *Elementa rhythmica*, it is a fair assumption to suggest *Elementa rhythmica* once contained a similar exposition, now unfortunately lost. As a result, the following discussion must rely on the content of *De musica* (which was also available in a Latin translation at the time).²⁶

Quintilianus' approach to metrics is systematic and parallel to his treatment of melody and rhythm. It begins with an exposition on the smallest part of the articulate sound, and then proceeds to discuss larger combinations: «The beginning of the science of metric is the discourse on elements, then one on syllables, then one on feet, then consequently one on meters and a final one on poetry, which is juxtaposed for a demonstration of the object of the science of metric».²⁷ Relevant for the present discussion is the fact that *De musica* gradually introduces the concepts of vowels, semivowels as well as consonants (mute or liquid), describing their respective audible effects before moving on to a discussion on poetic feet and poetry. Quintilianus also offers information regarding the airflow, and describes the resulting effects as either a smooth, rough or, of a medial character.²⁸ His exposition includes information on the possible degrees and placings of the interruption of the airflow (palatal, dental or labial), as well as additional details regarding the accumulation of air.

An element is the smallest part of articulate sound. Of elements, those emitting sound clearly and audibly are termed vowels, and those touching the hearing indistinctly, semivowels. Those sounding altogether small and obscure are named mutes, that is to say, with little tone [...]. And then, of the mutes, those moving the breath above are named smooth; those bringing forth the breath from within with vehemence, rough, and those acting intermediately, medial.²⁹

ARISTOXENUS, *Elementa rhythmica*, pp. 15–9 and 47–66.

26. Burana's Latin translation was prepared for the music theorist Gaffurio. On Burana's translation of *De musica*, see CLAUDE PALISCA, *Humanism in Italian Renaissance Musical Thought*, Yale University Press, New Haven-London 1985, pp. 111–3, 192 and 204. The medical doctor and philosopher Giovanni Francesco Burana was born in the last quarter of the fifteenth century in Verona. Between 1494 and 1497 he produced several translations at the request of Franchino Gaffurio, including Aristides Quintilianus' *De musica*.

27. QUINTILIANUS, *On Music*, p. 103.

28. Mathiesen's footnote clarifies matters: «The smooth mutes are pi, tau, kappa; the rough are phi, theta, and chi; the medial are beta, delta and gamma. Mutes are also classed as labial (pi, beta, phi), dental (tau, delta, theta) and palatal (kappa, gamma, chi)»; see QUINTILIANUS, *On Music*, p. 103, footnote 196.

29. QUINTILIANUS, *On Music*, p. 103.

Quintilianus also describes pairs of syllables by establishing a comparison between the individual syllables, qualifying the former as coarser, rougher (mute) and the latter variant as being of a milder and more delicate character (liquids). Here too, the reader encounters clear information regarding the blockage or the flow of air.

[...] as when two ensuing consonants, the former is mute, the latter liquid; for when the leading element of the combination happens to be of coarser sound, that of the second is thinner and is both elided and suppressed. [...] For while the rest of the liquids is pronounced by an emission of breath, this one alone we are forced to pronounce by blocking up the passage of our breath.³⁰

In Book II of *De musica*, Quintilianus provides the reader with further information regarding the quality of the syllables, now focusing on the placing of the articulation. The focus falls on the labial, dental and palatal mutes:

[...] some are sounded through the lips alone — by the breath forcing out the stoppage of the lips at the center — such as a beta and the mutes containing this sound,³¹ some sounded from the cheek with the lips parted a little — by the breath being emitted violently and broadly — such as the gamma and the extremes to either side,³² and some are sounded from the teeth separated a little — by the tongue as if it were slinging the breath suddenly at the center — such as tau and theta and the medial to these.³³

Many elements from these quotes resonate with Ganassi's chapters on instrumental articulation. Both authors, Quintilianus and Ganassi, opt to offer a systematic presentation of movements of the tongue ranging from single basic elements and syllables to other larger combinations of syllables. Furthermore, they equally expound their understanding of articulations using similar (phonetical) terminology, including information on matters such as the degree and placing of obstruction of the airflow, as well as on the airflow itself and the

30. QUINTILIANUS, *On Music*, p. 105.

31. See QUINTILIANUS, *On Music*, p. 140, footnote 228 for the identification of the other labial mutes as pi and phi.

32. These are the palatal mutes: kappa and chi. QUINTILIANUS, *On Music*, p. 140, footnote 229.

33. The medial dental mute is identified by Mathiesen as the delta. See QUINTILIANUS, *On Music*, p. 140, footnote 230. According to Mathiesen, in sections 11, 13 and 14 of Book II, Quintilianus also discusses how these elements will be related to ethical characters. See QUINTILIANUS, *On Music*, p. 103, footnote 196.

placing of the accumulation of air in the mouth. In that regard, for example, Ganassi's insistence on certain categories such as «lingua compiuta», «lingua non compiuta» creates a linguistic framework that allows for the inclusion of the basic linguistic elements, ranging from different consonants to two-syllable articulations. The recurrent reference to the role of the vowels in instrumental articulation could also be interpreted as an attempt to include all elements of (spoken) language, in emulation of *De musica*.

Furthermore, the definition of the original articulations as an expression of two extreme qualities, harshness and tenderness, as well as their medial, matches Quintilianus' description of the different mute consonants as rough, smooth or medial (which Burana translated to Latin as: «aspirata», «tenuia», «media»³⁴). Ganassi's choice of terminology («crudo & aspro, piacevole & plane, mediocre») is remarkably close to Quintilianus' and, by extension, to Burana's translation. The same can be said of the recurrent pieces of information scattered throughout the chapters on articulation regarding degrees of occlusion, the placing of the articulation (dental or frontal, palatal or guttural and other intermediate variants) and the consequent degree of accumulation of air in the mouth. The paired categories «lingua dretta» and «riversa» in *Fontegara* closely match Quintilianus' description of a pair of articulations (i.e. «the former is mute, the latter liquid») as the juxtaposition of two syllables of contrary qualities: mute and liquid, or frontal and guttural. The description of the effect of the flow or interruption of airstream as either «from above» (smooth mutes), «from within with vehemence» (coarser mutes), or «medial» is equally paralleled in Ganassi's classification of instrumental articulations.

Last but not least, Quintilianus' description of the labial mute consonants could offer a speculative interpretation of Ganassi's enigmatic description of an articulation which pronounces no syllable. In Ganassi's words, this tonguing occurs «da uno labro al altro», whereas Quintilianus states that the labial mutes are «sounded through the lips alone»³⁵. This interpretation implies that Ganassi perhaps did not fully grasp the concept of a labial mute as described in *De musica*. The possible presence of such a misconception demonstrates,

34. This fragment appears in the Latin translation made by Burana for the music theorist Gaffurio in fol. [10r] as: «Alia vero neutrius istorum differentiae partem habent. Mutorum igitur per se existentium, quę in superficiae movent spiritum, tenuia dicuntur; quę ex intimis partibus cum vehementia proferuntur, aspirata; quę vero inter hæc duo sunt, media». The text of *De musica* was only accessible due to the transcription kindly prepared for me by Ed van der Vlist (Koninklijke Bibliotheek). Burana's translation is now preserved in Verona at the Biblioteca Capitolare, CCXL (201), fols. 1r–37v (ARISTIDES QUINTILIANUS, *De musica*, transl. by Johannes Franciscus Burana, [Milan] 1494).

35. QUINTILIANUS, *On Music*, p. 140.

from yet another viewpoint, how closely Ganassi attempted to emulate the ancient model, including a somewhat odd reference to the lips. The emulation of Quintilianus' text certainly adds a new connotation to «imitation of the human voice» and to «imitar il parlar» in instrumental practice, evincing Ganassi's concern with poetic language.

In compagnia: Ganassi's socio-cultural milieu

Considering Ganassi's lack of humanistic training, suchlike misconceptions lead us to ponder on another crucial question: how did Ganassi gain access and an in-depth understanding of these complex ancient sources? The mapping out of his social milieu brings a few possible individuals that could have played a pivotal role to the fore, either due to their fluency in Greek and affinity with ancient Greek writings (e.g. Ludovico Dolce, Gianbattista Casali),³⁶ or related to the fact that their own writings contain references that point to the emulation of the same ancient sources. The theoretical writings of Ludovico Fogliano (who was fluent in Greek) seem to encompass all of these features and display many traces of Aristoxenean influence. Of particular interest is Fogliano's insistence on valuing the judgement of the ear («giudicio della orecchia») as an equipped arbiter for matters of intonation, thus moving away from the Pythagorean, mathematical approach. In his *Musica theórica* (Venice 1529), consonances are valued by the resulting pleasing sound, rather than by their perfect ratios, granting greater artistic power to sense perception. Surely, Aristoxenus' line of thought would be attractive to sixteenth-century practitioners (in particular instrumentalists), so it is perhaps no surprise that both authors reserve a central role to sense perception in their writings.³⁷

36. Gianbattista Casali was a diplomat who must have known Greek, and who was keenly interested in ancient Greek music, in particular, the expressive qualities of modes. In fact, Casali hosted gatherings to discuss Greek musical matters with musicians and theorists such as the *maestro di cappella* of St. Mark's Basilica Adrian Willaert and Giovanni Del Lago. See *A correspondence of Renaissance musicians*, ed. by Bonnie J. Blackburn, Edward E. Lowinsky and Clement A. Miller, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1991, pp. 370–1, 548–62 and 927–8 (letters nos. 25, 46, 98).

37. It is plausible that Ganassi and Ludovico Fogliano might have known each other. Ganassi's third treatise printed in Venice in 1543, *Letitione Seconda*, contains a madrigal composed by the theorist's brother, Giacomo Fogliano (*Io vorrei dio d'amore*). For the attribution of *Io vorrei Dio d'Amor* to Giacomo Fogliano, see IAIN FENLON – JAMES HAAR, *The Italian Madrigal in the Early Sixteenth Century: Sources and interpretation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1988, pp. 222–6 and 234–5. The madrigal appears in a volume containing three-voice madrigals, *Delli madrigali a tre voci*, Ottaviano Scotto, Venezia 1537 (RISM B/I

Furthermore, Silvestro Ganassi is mentioned in Pietro Aretino's *Le carte parlanti* (Venice 1543) and in Ludovico Dolce's *Dialogo della pittura* (Venice 1557), so it is plausible that he might have been a (peripheral) member of their socio-cultural milieu as well. These references, which are somewhat similar, indicate that Dolce and Aretino seem to have been acquainted with Ganassi and, at least to a certain extent, with his *Fontegara*.³⁸ Aretino's quote is of a light-hearted nature, mocking Ganassi's claim that an object can «imitar il parlar». He refers to *Fontegara*'s core objective, but ridicules it through the addition of a few amusing examples. In a dialogue form, *Le carte parlanti* (equally inanimate) satirically picture Silvestro Ganassi as a «musician painter and divine philosopher» who absurdly claims that all things speak: the noise of a shattered glass tells you that it is broken; the knocking on a door tells you it that there is someone is looking for you; cold, thirst and fatigue warn you to warm yourself up, to drink and to sleep, itching tells you to scratch yourself and, tiredness commands you to sit down. Aretino leaves little room for misinterpretation: «Il mondo è asinato».³⁹

1537/7) attributed to Jacobus Folia (Giacomo Fogliano) among other madrigals by Costanzo Festa. As the same madrigal appeared in a later volume (COSTANZO FESTA, *Il vero libro di madrigali a tre voci*, Antonio Gardano, Venezia 1543), it has been mistakenly attributed to Festa.

38. Note that Ludovico Fogliano was also acquainted with Aretino. In a letter, Aretino tries to persuade Fogliano to translate texts from Greek. Palisca quotes a letter from Aretino to Fogliano dated 30 November 1537: «If you start to render in our vernacular the Greek of Aristotle, you will be the cause of making bigger than men those people who, not understanding the language of others cannot derive benefit from a gift of nature. Surely you alone are qualified to clarify the obscure with your plain speech, sweetly opening senses, confused in the clouds of the material. Therefore, get on with your honoured translation, providing for the enrichment of ambitious intellects». PALISCA, *Humanism in Italian Renaissance Musical Thought*, p. 235, and for the complete text of the letter see PIETRO ARETINO, *Lettere*, vol. 1, ed. by Paolo Procaccioli, Salerno Editrice, Rome 1997, pp. 362–3, letter no. 26. Ganassi is also mentioned by other sixteenth-century authors (Pino, Sansovino, Folengo). The entire corpus of interdisciplinary references attests to Ganassi's social standing and prestige.

39. See PIETRO ARETINO, *Le carte parlanti*, ed. by Giovanni Casalegno and Gabriella Giaccone, Sellerio Editore, Palermo 1992, pp. 125–6. Of course, the satire also resides in the fact that the «carte» are the speaker in this dialogue. The complete quote in *Le carte parlanti* reads: «CARTE: Ci si farebbe postema, se non ti dicessimo che quando pur la pedagogia anfanì circa il parlar di noi che siamo carte, non accettando l'autorità di Silvestro Ganassi dal Fondago che, seguendo l'oppenione carnevalesca, vuole che ogni cosa favelli provandola con dire che il bicchiere che casca ti dice ch'egli è rotto con il suo farsi in cento pezzi, gli acquetaremos con le lore testimonianze. PADOVANO: Il mondo è asinato. CARTE: Il musico pittore e filosofo divinissimo dice che la porta bussata ti fa sapere che un ti dimanda, dice che la gonnella che puzza di abrusciaticcio ti scopre il carbone che la guasta. Dice che la chioccia, che ha smarriti i pulcini, gli chiama con il cò cò cò. Dice che la gallina, doppo il far de l'uovo, lo fa intendere

Ludovico Dolce's reference to Ganassi, on the other hand, touches upon a recurrent sixteenth-century debate of a more serious nature, which establishes a comparison between painting and poetry (referring to Horace's «ut pictura poesis»). The tone of Dolce's description is complimentary, and focusses on Ganassi's skills as a painter and, in particular, his ability to create the illusion that the depicted figures are alive and speak. Through the words of his semi-fictional interlocutor «Pietro Aretino», Dolce also makes it clear that the idea of talking images is not an effect or property of the depicted object, but an illusion created by the spectator's imagination: an imprint of an external stimulus upon the mind. Both quotes are comparable in that they present Ganassi as the defender of inanimate objects' ability to speak, or at least, give the illusion of being able to do so.

FAB: I would like to add that, even though the painter is defined as 'mute poet,' and though painting itself is similarly called 'mute,' nevertheless it works in such a way as to make it appear that the painted figures are talking, crying out, weeping, laughing and generally engaging in actions of this kind.

ARET: Such indeed is the appearance; in fact, however, they are not talking or doing any of those things.

FAB: Here one might solicit the opinion of your man of talent Silvestro, that excellent musician who performs for the Doge. For he draws and paints commendably, and gives us a tangible conviction that the figures painted by masters of quality are speaking, almost as though they were alive.

ARET: This idea is plain imagination on the spectator's part, prompted by different attitudes which serve that end. It is not an effect or a property of painting.⁴⁰

These quotes place Ganassi's «imitar il parlar» into an interdisciplinary context, uniting music, visual arts and poetry in emulation of ancient sources. Pietro Aretino's prominent position would certainly have granted him access

con lo schiamazzio. Dice che le palette, le molli e le forcine dal fuoco, che ne sappiamo noi...
 PADOVANO: Ah ah. CARTE: Ecco, dice egli, che il farti freddo, il venirti sete e il cardeti sonno, ti dice che tu vada a scaldarti, a bere e a dormire. Vuole che il roderti dica: grattati, e lo straccarti: sieda».

40. See MARK ROSKILL, *Dolce's Aretino and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto – Buffalo-London 1968, pp. 96–9. The original text reads: «FAB: In cio si puo ricercare il parer del vostro virtuoso Silvestro, eccelente Musico, e suonatore del Doge: ilquale disegna e dipinge lodevolmente: e ci far toccar con mano, che le figure dipinte da buoni Maestri parlano, quasi a paragon delle vive. ARET.: Questa è certa imaginatione di chi mira, causata da diverse attitudini, che a cio servono, e non effetto o proprietà della Pittura».

to the Bessarion collection, and his close friend Dolce was fluent in Greek. Aretino indeed borrowed a codex from the Bessarion collection (Vaticanus graecus 191) on 7 July 1522 and returned it on 8 August. This particular codex contained several works on music by different authors, among which the writings of Aristoxenus including *Elementa rhythmica*. Coincidentally, Pietro Bembo had also previously borrowed the exact same codex, and returned it on 4 February 1518.⁴¹ Clearly, Ganassi was in proximity to men with akin interest in Greek music and poetic matters, equipped with the intellectual apparatus and the language skills necessary to facilitate his access to the content of the relevant ancient sources.

Ganassi and Bembo: *questione della lingua*

This last reference brings us back to Pietro Bembo, who was appointed as librarian of the Bessarion collection in 1530. At that point, the collection was kept in an upper room of the Basilica di San Marco, where Ganassi was active as an instrumentalist of the *Signoria*.⁴² Their professional duties and the (albeit somewhat distant) family connection might have offered opportunities for the two men to discuss their shared interest in musical and poetical topics. Bembo's studious interest and knowledge of the musical and poetic sources could possibly have played an influential role in Ganassi conceptualisation of *Fontegara*. Much more interesting, however, is the possibility that the writings of the two men might display similarities that indicate that their music-poetical contents pay tribute to the same Greek sources. We must consider that there are elements in Bembo's *Prose* that exhibit an intriguing resemblance to Ganassi's treatment of (instrumental) articulations and his emphasis on «imitar il parlar». Although the discussion on poetic language in Bembo's *Prose* is of a totally different magnitude, scope and depth when compared to *Fontegara*, the affinity between these sources is definitely worthy of further scrutiny.

Sense perception seems to also play a significant role in Bembo's writings. Perhaps following Aristoxenus' line of thought, Bembo grants a primordial role to how sound is perceived by the senses and, more importantly, they

41. PALISCA, *Humanism in Italian Renaissance Musical Thought*, p. 34. The anthology also contains the writings of: «Gaudentius, Cleonides (two copies), Euclid (two copies), Aristoxenus, Alypius and Aristoxenus' rhythmic fragments».

42. For the eventful history of the arrival and preservation of the Bessarion collection until it was finally moved to the purportedly built library (Biblioteca Marciana) see LOTTE LABOWSKY, *Bessarion's Library and the Biblioteca Marciana: Six Early Inventories*, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, Rome 1979 (Sussidi eruditi, 31), pp. 23–9 and 32–73.

recognise the affective power of sound in its purest form. Although, of course, the nuanced reading of sense perception is shaped by the nature of their individual disciplines, Fogliano, Ganassi and Bembo share the understanding that sense perception (aesthesia) was a function of the mind, a response to external stimuli. Quintilianus emphasises the connection between rhythm, melos and diction and how they are perceived by the senses.⁴³ Equally, Ganassi and Bembo give a pertinent role to rhythm, melody and diction, as well as to the emotive power of these external stimuli as perceived by the senses.⁴⁴

First of all, Bembo proposes an understanding of the affective power of words, taking their individual sonorous qualities into consideration. Detached from their particular meaning, words are valued for their emotive impact on the listener, and described using specific terminology that echoes passages of the other sources discussed above: «grave», «dolce» or «mezzane et temperate».⁴⁵ In Bembo's new doctrine of propriety, the sound and rhythm of words are vehicles to express two extreme qualities, «gravità» and «piacevolezza», as well as their temperate mean.⁴⁶ In Bembo's *Prose*, sound and rhythm are

43. «Every rhythm is perceived by these three faculties of sense: vision, as in dance; hearing, as in *melos*, and touch, like the pulse beats of the arteries. But rhythm in music is perceived by only two: vision and hearing. In music, motion of the body, melody and diction are rhythmically organized. [...] These all mixed together make song». See QUINTILIANUS, *On Music*, p. 94.

44. The understanding that sense perception is somewhat guided by a natural affinity to certain ratios and proportions is equally important for both authors: «rhythm is divided in diction by syllables, in melos by the proportions of arses and theses». See LEWIS ROWELL, *Aristoxenus on Rhythm*, and QUINTILIANUS, *On Music*, p. 94.

45. See PIETRO BEMBO, *Prose della volgar lingua: l'editio princeps del 1525 riscontrata con l'autografo Vaticano latino 3210*, ed. by Claudio Vela, CLUEB, Bologna, 2001, pp. 61–2 and 71–6. See also, MACE, *Pietro Bembo and the Literary Origins of the Italian Madrigal*, pp. 65–86.

46. See MACE, *Pietro Bembo and the Literary Origins of the Italian Madrigal*, pp. 69–70: «In Bembo's new doctrine of "propriety" [...] words are not to take their places in a verse or sentence because of their established sense or their own qualities as "names", but because through their sound and rhythm they could create in some mysterious way the qualities of "piacevolezza" or "gravità". Bembo was not interested in the word as a name but as an "affective" sound; therefore he thought that "piacevolezza" or "gravità", being not in the things named but in the intention of the namer, were chiefly to be associated with the only variable elements of the word – that is, with sounds and rhythms. [...] He was giving over to sounds and rhythms 'without fixed intellectual meaning' a major share of effect in poetic language». Of course, Mace is mainly concerned with the origins of the madrigal style: «it is doubtful that such an extraordinary development would have taken place had not the principle first been established that sound in language could [...] embody affective "meaning". If this could be imagined as a possibility with language alone it had to be imagined with music associated with language».

paramount means to convey emotive content, so that several arrangements of purposely chosen words, although nearly identical in significance, can create a totally different affective quality: «a change in a rhythm or a sound changes the meaning. Sounds and rhythms have ‘valore sentimentale’». ⁴⁷ Bembo examines the three elements of language that are components to achieve «piacevolezza» and «gravità» in poetry: «suono», «numero», and «variazione». «Numero» relates to the quantity of syllables, long or short, which altogether with the various placing of words’ stress and accents might create diverse effects, qualified either as «piacevole» (when the accent falls on the antepenultimate syllable), «temperata» (on the penultimate syllable) or «grave» (on syllable of the word). ⁴⁸ Quintilianus’ *De musica* proposes a similar understanding of the effects of longer or shorter syllables:

Clearly from the quality of these elements, the blendings of syllables are contrived, alike to the expanding of the elements or the prevailing of the characteristics in the voicings. Long syllables create magnificence in diction, short syllables the opposite. From the composition of these, feet are produced, of which, those having long syllables [...] are more refined and dignified [...] but those abounding in short syllables [...] are more plain and lowly. ⁴⁹

It suffices to note that both Bembo and Ganassi propose a careful handling of musical notes and syllables, giving great importance to their lengths as means to generate a varied poetic arrangement, and qualify the resulting effects with identical terminology («piacevole», «temperata» or «grave»). Moreover, the core elements of Bembo’s poetic theory (sound, rhythm and variation) are equally relevant to the conceptualisation of Ganassi’s *Fontegara*, contributing to the achievement of the main goal of the treatise, «imitar il parlar», through the adherence to the Greek principles applicable to poetic feet as a compositional criterion to meticulously craft diminutions, thus uniting «melos» and «diction». That a treatise on diminution style is in essence the embodiment of variation is, in itself, not really surprising. However, in chapter 21 of *Fontegara*, Ganassi advocates in favour of diminutions that consist of a «mixture» of all proportions, and qualifies such continuous variation as being of a higher artistic level: the «vera cognitione». He states: «if you would wish to practise

47. See MACE, *Pietro Bembo and the Literary Origins of the Italian Madrigal*, p. 70.

48. «Numero altro non è che il tempo; che alle sillabe si da o lungo, o breve, hora per opera delle lettere, che fanno le sillabe; hora per cagione de gli accenti, che si danno alle parole»; see BEMBO, *Prose della volgar lingua*, p. 84.

49. QUINTILIANUS, *On Music*, p. 140.

this kind of mixture, I should warn you that when you make two or three passages, you should make these diminutions in [such a way] that they are differentiated among themselves, so that they are pleasing, gracious and varied [in terms of] composition of the melodic contour».⁵⁰

Furthermore, a certain degree of parallelism seems to exist between Ganassi's detailed account of tonguings as vehicles of emotional content, and Bembo's approach to «suono». Ganassi describes the sonorous effects of his three original tonguings in a threefold system that matches Bembo's «gravità», «piacevolezza» or their mean. Most importantly, their phonetic nature is examined in detail as means to clarify the intrinsic emotive value. In conformity with Quintilianus' model, both authors make sure to include a discussion on language and diction that departs from its smallest elements (consonants and vowels).⁵¹

Bembo clearly ranks the different character of the vowels. The shape of lips whilst pronouncing the different vowels is used as argumentation for their hierarchy. His account also provides information about the flow of air whilst pronouncing a vowel.

Ora perciò, che il contento, che dal componimento nasce di molte voci, da ciascuna voce ha origine; et ciascuna voce delle lettere, che in lei sono, riceve qualità et forma; è di mestiero sapere quale suono rendono queste lettere, o separate o accompagnate, ciascuna. [...] E di queste tutte miglior suono rende la A; concisia cosa che ella piu di spirito manda fuori, percioche con piu aperte labbra nel manda, et piu al cielo ne va esso spirito: Migliore dell'altre poi la E, in quanto ella più a queste parti s'avicina della primiera [...]. Viene ultimamente la U; et questa, percioche con le labbra in cerchio molto piu che nella O ristretto, dilungate si genera; il che toglie alla bocca et allo spirito dignita, cosi nella qualita del suono, come nell'ordine, è sezzaia.⁵²

50. See GANASSI, *Fontegara*, chapter 21. For the translation see TITAN, *The Origins of Instrumental Diminution*, Annexe II, p. xci, paragraph [90].

51. See MACE, *Pietro Bembo and the Literary Origins of the Italian Madrigal*, p. 72: «Bembo carried his investigations of sound into the very vowels and consonants [...]. Since each word is composed of this or that vowel or consonant it is “now grave, now light, now harsh, now delicate, sometimes of one manner and sometimes of another”, each sound always tending toward either “piacevolezza” or “gravità”». The original text reads: «Conosciute hora queste forze tutte delle lettere torno a dire, che secondamente che ciascuna voce le ha in se; cosi ella è hora grave, hora leggiera, quando aspera, quando molle, quando d'una guisa e quando d'altra; e quali sono poi le guise delle voci, che fanno alcuna scrittura; tale è il suono, che del mescolamento di loro esce, o nella prosa, o nel verso; e talhora gravita genera e talora piacevolezza». See BEMBO, *Prose della volgar lingua*, p. 76.

52. BEMBO, *Prose della volgar lingua*, p. 72.

The inclusion of vowels is somewhat expected in a literary treatise such as *Prose*, but it is surely surprising to encounter it in an instrumental treatise like *Fontegara* as, for recorder players, the shape of the lips is predetermined by the position of the instrument in ones' mouth, so the sonorous effect of vowels would only be marginal. Would it be farfetched to speculate that Ganassi's insistence on variation of vowels is simply an attempt to present instrumental technique in intellectualised terms, following the linguistic models as offered by Quintilianus and, by extension, Bembo?

The preoccupation with the affective, artistic communication emerges as a recurrent matter in the writings of these authors. How (articulated) sounds reach, affect and move the listener is directly related to their inner qualities, rather than their objective meaning. Ludovico Fogliano also offers a condensed understanding of the affective powers of sound:

I say that sound is a sensible quality arising from a violent and precipitous motion of the air that is commensurate with it. It is said to be a passive quality because whatever is able to alter the sense is a passive quality. Sound is capable of altering the sense; therefore sound is a passive quality.⁵³

Without underestimating the many differences between the poetic discussion in Ganassi and Bembo's writings, it is noteworthy that their work set forth a very similar focus on poetic language as vehicle to effective emotive communication, as well as an innovative handling of «questione della lingua» in emulation or, at least, in admiration of ancient sources. The discussion above also highlights the prominent and influential role that Pietro Bembo (among others) might have played in terms of the fostering of academic debate, which in turn functioned as a propeller of artistic innovation truly anchored in poetic and musical sources of a distant historical past. The absence of a clear acknowledgement of the conceivable borrowing of ancient Greek intellectual heritage might seem striking for our modern eyes that are so accustomed with copyright and plagiarism issues. Instead of hastily explain this shortcoming from a negative perspective, it is perhaps possible to propose that it is as testimony of the tight connections and shared interests of a group of friends and artists who playfully refer to each other. The references were only hidden to those other sixteenth-century readers who were unaware of the content of the Greek sources. For the members of this privileged inner circle of 'connoisseurs', however, they would have been promptly clear. After all, the assimilation of the ancient heritage into their own works, in fact, is well-aligned with

53. PALISCA, *Humanism in Italian Renaissance Musical Thought*, p. 239.

the reasoning behind the Bessarion's Act of Donation: «to salvage [...] the intellectual heritage of ancient and medieval Greece, [...], to bring about a fusion of Greek and Latin traditions in a single Christian civilization».⁵⁴

54. LABOWSKY, *Bessarion's Library and the Biblioteca Marciana*, p. 3.