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Dialogue on the Controversy between Cazzati and Arresti

Dialogue made between a Teacher and a Pupil eager to do well in the art of counterpoint.

Pupil. Here I am, Teacher Sir, with my composition

Teacher. What composition?

Pupil. Your Lordship told me that, if I really want to learn Music, it is necessary that I should write as a score the compositions of Able Men, and particularly of those who have theirs printed.

Teacher. This is true. But, tell me, from which Author did you take your inspiration? In fact, there are many nowadays who have appeared in print who make the greatest blunders in the World in truth, either because this Art is vanishing, or because those who practised it do not follow the good rules, or because there is a shortage of Teachers. Nevertheless, it is certain that when somebody can skewer, for instance, the third and the fifth on top of a F fault, immediately he passes himself off as a composer, expects to obtain the position as leader of the best Chapels, and makes his name resound in a thousand printed works. However, if one wants to have his works printed and not be derided, one must know much more than the third or the fifth.

Pupil. I understand you very well. As to what you asked, I took the Opus XVII Signor Mauritio Cazzati, and I put into a score his Mass for five voices à Capella, and I have taken it to you, so that we might have a discussion on it. Since I have some questions on some passages, I hope you will agree to consider it a while, if you please, so that I may benefit somewhat from your explanation of them.

Teacher. I meant this indeed, as you are such an Idiot. I have so many printed books by good Authors in my study, and you went to pick the worst that there is. You saw that the books have the corners gilded in gold and bindings the colour of fire, and you thought that you would find jewels and pearls inside, but the habit does not the Monk make.

Pupil. Not only the curiosity to see their first-page persuaded me to choose those, but there are also other reasons. Firstly, it is the Opus XVII of this Composer. Secondly, the Author is the Master of the Chapel of San Petronio at Bologna, which is a very notable and respected city, where many men achieved fame because of their musical skills, such as Andrea Rota, a Girolamo Giacobbi, Camillo Cortellini, Lorenzo Vecchi, a Francesco Milani and many others.

Teacher. I will reply to everything by the end, if I have enough time. Therefore, pass me my Glasses straight away, so that we can start our discussion, since I do not want you to have laboured in vain.

Pupil. Here they are. This is the score of the Mass. We could start to have a look at the first Kyrie.

Teacher. Better than to start from the Agnus. Will you let me see? Tell me, did you understand on which tone is based this Kyrie?

Pupil. Yes, Sir. It is based on the first Tone.

Teacher. Tell me the reason why.

Pupil. The reason is that it begins in D la sol re and ends in D la sol re, and besides, the Author has had the sentiment to build the Mass entirely on the first Tone.

Teacher. You are an ignorant man, and the Author is not more worthy than you than a couple of worthless coins, because it is not enough to start and finish in D la sol re and to have the sentiment, as you say, in order for a composition to be of the first tone, because, first of all it is necessary to progress through the notes which pertain to that tone, to know them and to be able to use them in such a way as not to make the listener uncertain as to the tone on which the composition is based. I see that the Alto starts and says re re re mi fa sol [fa add. supra lin.] mi re. Therefore, I say that, none of all these notes, of all these note-values of this part, [-<2>-] which is the first one to start, written as they are, belongs to the first Tone, and nor it can belong to it, because this is not the way it moves and its air. The raised Ffaut in the second bar and the hit on the Gsolreut placed in the third bar provide particular awareness of this.

Pupil. Teacher sir, Your Lordship, you must excuse me, but it seems to me that the first Tenor sings in the first Tone and that its answer is very suited to the air of said Tone.

Teacher. I do not deny that the Tenor and also the Soprano do begin the Fugue, or the subject in the first tone, and that the way they progress is acceptable, but this is not enough. It is necessary to answer to the Alto, which is the first one to start, and if it calls for chalk, one cannot pass him mortar.

Pupil. Therefore the answer of the Tenor and of the Soprano to the Alto is not good?

Teacher. No, Sir.

Pupil. So, what should it say?

Teacher. If the Tenor should answer to the Alto, because it is the first to start, one should change all the parts and also change the end of the melodic line working in different tone. If one does not want to change the Alto, it would be convenient for the Tenor to answer it in the first manner, at its place, and not in the second, thus  
[Arresti, Dialogo,<2>]

It would also be necessary to finish the melody on Gsolreut of the eighth tone, if one wanted to answer it in strict fashion, as one must. Also, if occasionally one wrote a part like the first tenor and the Soprano, one would not write it, unless one were forced to do so, and that would be called an imitation of the fugue, rather than an answer.

Pupil. I like Your Lordship's idea, but I would like you to tell me why the Author writes the entry of the tenor in the fourth bar as la fa re, while the others have said re re mi fa sol.

Teacher. I reply to this that the second Tenor is tolerable, because it is the last one to arrive, and one might presume that it did not understand the proposal of the other parts, or, that it hails from that Country, which produces Tenors that want to speak always in their own way.

Pupil. You joke, but I have to confess, in truth, that the entry of this second tenor has given me some nuisance, since I believed that the Author wanted to lay out some other subject in order to combine both of them afterwards and create a good study in counterpoint. I checked through all the Kyrie and I found nothing else but the Bass at bar seven and the Soprano at bar nine which say la fa la, but this is different from the subject proposed by the Tenor, which says la fa re. Therefore, if the Author incurred such extraordinary blunders in his Opus XVII, what the Devil must have he done [in his Opus one and two? infra lin.]

Teacher. I have already told you that this Author is bad and should not be imitated in anything, because in the five parts of this Kyrie there is not a note which is written correctly. Many parts enter and start again improperly, such as the second Tenor at bar four, as we have already said, and also at bar eight after the rest, where it says sol fa, and as the Alto at bar six, where it says fa mi, and the Soprano at the last bar, where it says la

la. These are notable errors, because, although these parts have few rests, nevertheless the Composer is bound, when he starts again in one part, to start appropriately, and not with la fa re sol fa, and fa mi, when it has been said re re re mi fa sol. Also, when the Bass says la fa la at bar seven, although it has no rest, it says badly, because after the cadence on A la mi re, it starts on a mi which is different from the first proposed subject, which good Authors observe very well.

Pupil. Therefore, your Lordship concludes that this Author committed many mistakes with regard to the Tone.

Teacher. I repeat to you that, as far as the Tone is concerned, it was started badly, and ended in a worse fashion. As to the fugues, when I look at this composition, it seem to me as if I was witnessing someone from Bergamo talking with an Englishman, and a Sicilian with Frenchman, and that nobody understands his Interlocutor.

[<3>-] Pupil. I believe that we have talked enough, probably, about the Tone and the fugues, and I hope to have learned something on the back of this Author, who, through the courtesy of Your Lordship, has taught me to avoid those errors of which he has fallen foul. However, I would like us to discuss the way to dispose the fugues, the singing of the parts and the consonances, because in these particular matters there is something that I cannot understand well without your help.

Teacher. I am ready, but I need to say my opinion. You have presented me with something full of dirty mistakes. It must be that this Cazzati never had a Teacher, or that he thought he knew a lot when he started to publish music in print. These note values placed one against the other and move in this way do not belong to [Crvd] cut time. I do not see ligatures here, but I see that the first Tenor at bar two starts singing with a semibreve, while the Contralto holds the note, itself with a note of the same value. At bar three the first Tenor, the Alto and the Soprano hold their note and they all move, but not at the same time. This mistake occurs in many other passages, therefore, this way of disposing the notes is called the movement of skewered notes. It is not necessary for me to tell you that many parts sing badly, because you can know this very well just by looking at them. Firstly, the Soprano from bar six to the end sings badly. The Contralto is even worse from the fourth bar until the end, while the first Tenor from the beginning until the end repeats the same music. The second Tenor sounds like a Drunk and I do not see any of these parts that stand out because of their vivacity. Every motion that the Bass goes through cannot be considered of the first Tone.

Pupil. I understand Your Lordship very well, but let us look at the consonances in a little detail, as maybe we will find some judicious passage or feature, so that nobody will denounce the damage of so many mistakes found in the tone, in the fugues, in the disposition of the note-values and in the singing of the parts.

Teacher. I will do this willingly, but we will find some passages to be laughed at, rather than to be admired.

Pupil. What have we got to lose? It will serve us as a pastime.

Teacher. Have a look, if you please, and see what elegant harmony the Alto and the Tenor offer to the ear. At bar two they move both together, at bar three the Alto is accompanied by a minor sixth and the Tenor arrives to a diminished fifth, and then, when one believes that that fifth gives satisfaction to the ear, here comes a more obnoxious passage: the Soprano starts at a sixth, which is dissonant with the Alto, the Alto provides a third to the sharpened csolfaut of the Tenor, which cannot help but sounding dissonant, or at least very harsh, when all three parts are hit together. If you do not believe me, do let us sing it, so you will hear it. Then, to tell you the truth, I have seen scores of so many able composers, and I have never seen this passage, in cut time [Crvd], which consists in arriving at the third and raising the lower part. I have seen composers alter or diminish the

top part, which is the third, and make it major or minor according to their taste. As to the chord stricken at bar Four, where all of the five parts come in, the consonant third is missing, but would provide completeness to the sound and it would satisfy the ear. The Alto provides it shortly after and the first Tenor [-<4>-] takes away the octave to move to Alamire, when the second Tenor enters on the same note, so, that is considered to be in five parts turns out to be in two parts, since the Soprano is also still on Alamire. On the downbeat, the second Tenor provides the third and the Soprano hits it with the b mi, which is the enemy of E Faut F Faut, and a little later the Alto makes the same mistake with the first Tenor, so that it is as if I can see some blind men hitting each other with sticks in this bar.

As to the downbeat of the fifth bar, I say nothing because I have a lot to say about the upbeat of that bar (before I do this, I want to talk about according to the duration of the breve in the upbeat). So, the Alto creates two octaves, or goes from the octave to the unison with the second Tenor, which is completely prohibited if one wants to keep to the good rules of writing for voices alone. In this passage there are several errors. Firstly the Alto and the two Tenors are still on Alamire. The Alto creates two octaves and, if one is rigorous, the second Tenor also makes two octaves with that leap from the Elami to the note of Alamire, or two unisons, which is the same, with first Tenor. The first Tenor, after a little while, goes to find the minor fifth upwards, which is a very ugly transition. The Soprano accompanies the bass with the harmony of the thirteenth, which is too far removed at that point, since all the parts are in the low register. Can you not see that a track full of hay would be able to pass across them?

Pupil. Hay would be good for my Horse.

Teacher. It would be better for the Donkey who this Author is. At bar sixth the second Tenor accompanies badly the <first> Tenor in that seventh, and comes to the fifth instead. At the beginning the octave is missing to the Gsolreut of the Bass. At bar Seven the resolution is hit again and again, at bar eight the soprano hits the seventh with the first Tenor, the second with the Bass at the same time, and the fourth with the Alto, and the Alto hits the second with the second Tenor. A little while further there follow two fifths, one on the downbeat and the other one in the first beat of the ninth bar; the first one is diminished, so that these horrendous stupidities can never be tuned, as one can see in the upbeat of the ninth bar. The first Tenor then places it incomplete because it lacks the consonant octave, and it is at an interval of a fifth with the soprano, when two fifths are produced in the downbeat of bar ten between the soprano and the first Tenor. This is such a great mistake in a Composer that I believe that, had the Author been a subject of the Prince of Venosa, who published Madrigals so full of doctrine, I swear to Heaven, that he would have made him rot in a prison. At the beginning of the last bar, a consonant note is missing, so that one can see so many errors in every bar and in every note-value of this little Kyrie, that one could write a book about them, let alone a small essay.

Pupil. Sir, I confess that I have seen things, that if anyone had told me, I would never have believed them. By continued examination of the notes which have been written so badly, I have learned to be aware of the many mistakes which I may incur, if I decide to make progress in this virtuous discipline. However, let us continue to examine the rest of this Mass for voices alone.

Teacher. You must excuse me, because I have found the Author to be very ignorant at the beginning of this piece, therefore, if I wanted to examine the rest, woe betide me, I would have take a bear to Modena, and I have not realise it just now. Firstly, this man composes without a Cartella, even for voices alone. Secondly, he does not understand Latin, nor can build a musical structure, as one can see from the myriad of works what he has published. He writes compositions in four voices with skewered notes, note against note, and in the

parts which he gives to the singers he writes 'for four Choirs' and 'for six Choirs with two Choirs of Instruments', and, like Zanino da Capugnano, who painted large butterflies and wrote above them 'Doves', he writes introductions to the Gloria, to the Credo and to the Laudate, he writes sophistic oddities never heard of, makes solo voices sing, when he has eighty Singers, cannot dispose or place the Choirs, cannot give the note and is fearful of singing when he has no Organ, Violone and Suckbutt blowing in his ear, he enjoys gaining acclaim thanks to others' compositions, he cannot teach to those mentioned above which are necessary to the Chapels and the service of the Church, as he is obliged to do, he uses bergamasche, Chaconnes and Ruggieri and calls them Rittornelli.

[-<5>-] [Arresti, Dialogo, <5>; text:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, i0, ii, Messa del Signor Cazzati in Stampa Opera XVII à Capella.]

First Chapter, bar one.

Since the Composition is of the first Mode or Tone, the subject or fugue, which the Alto begins, moves through notes appropriate to said Tone

[The most excellent Zerlin, Third part, Chapter 26. Oratio Tigrin, second book, Chapter II. 14, 14, Third book, Chapter 28. Nicolo Vicentin, book four, Chapter 24, Ludouico Zacconi book four, chapter five. Oracio Flacco Poeta humano capiti <(Ars poetica, 1)> in marg.]

Second Chapter, bar two and three.

According to the rules of the harmonic Tones, the first Tenor and the soprano answer the Alto badly. After the minor fifth the lower part must not be altered.

[Zerlin, third part, Chapter 26. 24, Camillo Angleria, Chapter ten. in marg.]

Third Chapter bar four.

The second Tenor does not answer the Alto and sings without the supporting reason of the cantus firmus. [Trigrin, Chapter 11. in marg.]

The note mi is not placed against the note fa, particularly on the downbeat

[Zerlin, third part, chapters 24. 30. 47. Tigrin, book two, third Chapter, Zacconi, book four, Chapter five, Francesco Piovesana, Chapter 15 in marg.]

[-<6>-] Fourth Chapter. bar five.

One must not move from the octave to the unison and a semiminim does not save the two unisons made by the two Tenors.

[Zarlin, Third part, Chapter twenty-nine; Angleria, Chapter four in marg.]

One cannot move to the imperfect fifth without first hitting the minor sixth

[Zerlin, Third part, Chapter twenty-nine; Angleria, Chapter four in marg.]

Troppo è lontana l'Armonia, e la consonanza, che porge il Soprano al Basso stando l'Alto in Alamire con i duoi Tenori. [Tigrin libro secondo Capitolo 14. Franchino libro terzo Capitolo 15 add. in marg.]

Fifth Chapter, Bar Six

It is a good rule not to resolve the seventh with the fifth in the indecent manner adopted by the second Tenor with the Bass. [Angleria, Chapter 12.]

Sixth Chapter, bar eight

One must not hit three dissonances in this way, namely, fourth, seventh and ninth

[Zarlin, Third part, Chapter 27. in marg.]

Seventh Chapter, Bar nine

One cannot move from the minor sixth to the fifth ascending by leap. [Angleria, eight and ninth Chapter.]

Eighth Chapter, Bar ten

On the downbeat of the bar there are two perfect fifth, which is a very notable error

[Zerlin, part three [two ante corr.], Chapter 29, Tigrini book two [three ante corr.] Chapter

2 in marg.]

Ninth Chapter, Bar eleven

The Composition lacks Harmony at the beginning of the bar and in many other places on the upbeat and on the down beat, namely at bar four, five and nine [Franchino, third book, Chapter three, Piovesana, Chapter thirteen, Knight Bottrigari, Giovan Battista Bolognese and all the other Authors in marg.]

Tenth Chapter

The Soprano, Alto, Tenore and the basso do not sing with the order that is required [Zarlino, third part, Chapter thirty-eight, Conventio, first book, Chapter 13. Tigrin, Chapter 20, second book in marg.]

Eleventh Chapter

All the Composition is built without method, without reason; it is scarcely graceful, even less elegant, devoid of all the precepts and rules of the Excellent Masters from which one must not depart, since those precepts are clearly defined and the good rules of this Mathematical Science are set.

A Letter sent to the Chapter of San Petronio

At Bologna, on the day 13 September 1659 a letter was handed, delivered by hand, to Signor Mauritio Cazzati by the very Excellent and most Reverend Signor Giulio Prati, canon of the most illustrious Collegiate Church of san Petronio, and Doctor of one and the other Law. The letter was signed by Don Lorenzo Persi, Head of Staff of that church, and it contained many errors made by Signor Mauritio in the first Kyrie of the Messa à 5 for voices alone, which was printed in his Opus XVII. Signor Mauritio accepted the letter, and promised to reply, if the sender was someone moderately learned and expert in the science of music. Don Lorenzo Persi, who commits himself to the courtesy of Signor Mauritio in this matter, says that, if he is not learned and expert, at least he desires to learn and to practise the music, therefore, he has awaited the reply to that letter, and he is still waiting for it, at the convenience of said Signore. However, since it is important first of all to explain and prove those reasons which [-<7>-] moved Don Lorenzo to try that imperfect composition, it is necessary to know that the reasons referred to Virtue, in every aspect.

The first one is that in producing works for the Chapel, namely the one of his Highness the Pope, of San Petronio at Bologna, of San Marco in Venice, of Loreto and similar ones, Signor Mauritio must not practice a new style and new rules in composing which depart from the precepts of the Excellent Authors, and which are approved by saying that it is a new style, since one thing is style, another is rule. Style consists in the character of the composition, whether cheerful, sad, easy or difficult, but the rule has to be observed inviolably, and if someone wants to depart from it, or heads a new School, or publishes a book of music Theory and adopts solid reasons to allow the errors by way of a rule and said: "I publish books of practical music which contain many errors, and some are sold in bookshops," he must be told: "It remains to be seen who buys them."

Second. When a composer wants to create a composition, he must choose the mode and tone which he must use to build a well-ordered piece. However, if Signor Mauritio starts in a mode, answers in another one and concludes in yet another one, he shows that he observes no order and renders the composition confused like the monster described by Oratio Flacco in the first book of his Ars Poetica.

Terzo. When the Musician sets out to write a piece, he must decide the number of the voices or Chords that he wants to use in his composition, and all those voices, which are

set to participate, must not be idle, but sing or answer the fugue, or proceed as a consequent according to the rules. However, when said Signore lays out the Mass for five voices and uses only three or four of them; since that harmony, produced when everyone is singing together, is lacking in many places, it has to be said that it was not necessary to lay out five voices when three or four could have achieved the same effect, because "it is useless to do with many, et cetera." Those who write for four or five Choirs and deploy sixteen or twenty singers, but then make one voice or, at the most, two sing, commit the same mistake. However, when they have the opportunity to display some noble subject, to have it imitated or repeated by the singers as much as possible, and then, by interweaving the voices and the Choirs, to let a sweet booming sound reach the ears of the listener, they do not take it.

Fourth. If one says that the entry of the second Tenor is an error, this is not proven on the basis of the authorities contained in the letter, but one adds that that part in that Kyrie serves as an cluttering obstacle. In fact, what has to do that useless Tenor which does not answer and sings in its own way? If one were to say that it enriches the harmony, that it sings imitating some cantus firmus, that it answers with an inversion, that it introduces a new subject which is repeated by the other parts, it might be allowed, but, since it does nothing of the like, one must concede that it is a mistake. One might say that the Ruggiero and the Bergamasca, which the blind street players play, pleases, and yes, it does please, but to please is not enough, as one must display artful craft. Then, one disapproves the fact that he displeases because he hits the *F* with the *b* of the Soprano, which are notes that clash very harshly with each other, and it touches natural when the bass goes to find it sharpened. This way of writing is called bad relations by the Masters, and must be avoided. Such are the instructions of Knight Bottrigaro, Zerlino, Tigrini and Spadari in his volumes, while Palestrina, Rota, Giacobbi, Crivelli, Rovetta (Master of the Chapel at San Marco), Father Nadal Monferati (vice-Master), and Cavalli show it in practice. These are contemporary Authors who observe the rules and the modes of the ancients when they compose, and particularly when they write for voices alone, which is the basis of our essay.

Fifth. Since one can never find a consonance which is better and more perfect than the octave, and, after the octave, than the fifth, the ancient and modern masters forbid in Theory and observed this prohibition in practice, namely, that one should never write two fifths one after the other. They adduce a very valid reason, namely, that since these consonances are the most perfect, when they are touched our hearing is satisfied to the highest degree. So, in order to delight man, who always desires new things, they made it a law, that they should be played but only once, and after them there should follow some imperfect consonances, and also some dissonances, placed and resolved according to the rules, so that the lack of delight in one would be compensated by the greater pleasure deriving from the others. But, when said Signore writes the two fifths between the first Tenor and the Soprano, he departs greatly from this instruction which is religiously observed by composers. One must not adduce to his defence the fact that Monteverde did it, because a flower does not make spring, but it was a shortcoming, and not a regular feature of that most Excellent Master, and he did it as an eccentricity only once, and not in a church work for voices alone, which is the Heroic style of Music.

Sixth. Since the aim of the Composer is to delight two kind of persons, namely who is an expert and who is not, when Signor Mauritio moves from the diminished diapente and goes to the minor ditone sharpening the lower part in the third bar of his Kyrie, when he moves from the diapente to the unison, when he resolves the major hexacord with the diapente, when he moves from the minor hexachord to the diapente ascending by leap, when he goes from the diminished diapente to the perfect one by stepwise motion, when

he touches the diminished diapente without having touched the the minor sixth first, when accompanies a low bass with the highness of the lasolre of the Soprano, with these errors he does not delight the experts. Then, when he hits three dissonances at once, when the Soprano sings without vivacity, when the Alto does not move about freely with gracefulness, when the Tenor does not observe the modulation of the tone, when the bass does not provide firmness, gravity and foundation, then, even those who are not experts do not derive any pleasure, just as those other ones who are music connoisseurs. Don Lorenzo Perti did not make a note of these mistakes as a means of revenge, because of the terms used by Signor Mauritio in the compositions that he misappropriated and which were by the said Perti, but only for the desire that he has to achieve perfection in this Science, or because of the affection that he feels towards his Homeland, who like a Logia of the world distinguished what is true from what is false and did not give a thought to displease any of his Superiors through his imagination.