

Author: Doni, Giovanni Battista

Title: Discourse on the rhythmic composition of Latin verses and on the melody of the Greek tragic choruses dedicated to Signor Giovanni Iacopo Buccardi

Original Title: Discorso Della Ritmopeia de' Versi Latini et della Melodia de' Cori Greci Tragichi  
Discorso [[Tragichi]] Al Signor Giovanni Iacopo Buccardi

Source: Florence, Biblioteca Marucelliana, MS A.CCXCIV.8., f.<37r>-<55v>

[-f.37r-] Discourse on the rhythmic composition of Latin verses and on the melody of the Greek tragic choruses dedicated to Signor Giovanni Iacopo Buccardi

Since Vostra Signoria requested with great interest my opinion on the observance of the quantity of the syllables in the Latin verses that are set to music and on the handling of tragic choruses, taking the cue from Seneca's *Troades* which is performed during this carnival season for the most part according to the manner of the ancients by having only the most emotional monologues and the choruses sung rather than the entire action under the orders of his Eminence Signor Cardinal Barberino, our common ruler and prince, who is extremely learned in every most rare and esteemed field of erudition, I agreed gladly to such a just request. In fact, apart from the fact that I always cultivated this sort of studies, which are so attractive and enjoyable per se, I always sought to accommodate the tastes of His Eminence as much as anyone else, which, as everyone knows, are always aiming towards noble and virtuous actions. Moreover, the sentiment of friendship that I feel towards Vostra Signoria almost obliges me to fulfil Your wish not only in this instance, but also in much more important matters. All the more willingly I have set out to compose this discourse because, since [-f.37v-] I am familiar with your most fine judgement especially in discerning the most intimate beauties of the Latin language and its poets and with your great personal ability in managing events and in mastering the art of music and composition, I have come to the certain conclusion of the success of this enterprise, especially since the task of composing the music was entrusted to Signor Virgilio Mazzocchi, about whom one cannot say whether his ability in composing or his sweetness and likeability of character is greater. The latter quality (to the confusion of certain ignorant and presumptuous people) not only captivates the minds of his interlocutors, but also enables him to receive from learned persons many very precious instructions that the profession of composer does not teach. However, I do want to concentrate on only certain aspects, since the lack of time does not allow us to deal with that topic in detail and methodically, as I shall do another time, God willing. Therefore, not only I shall take for granted that everyone knows what rhythm is, what its species are, that *rhythmopoeia* is the art of combining rhythms and movements with each other and that it has the same relation to the discipline concerned with the elements of rhythm as composition has towards the discipline concerned with sounds, I want to establish some other preliminary notions that are well known and do not require demonstration. I premise first that what we call *aria* in Italian cannot be expressed fully [-f.38r-] in Greek or in Latin with a single word because it embraces two aspects, namely, what the Greeks call *melos* and the Romans call *modus*, and the rhythm, so called by the Greeks (corresponding to the Latin *numerus*) which is really a more essential part of what we call *aria* than the *melos*, as design is more important than colour in painting. For this reason Martianus Capella on the basis of Pythagorean doctrine ascribes it to the masculine, while the *melos* is assigned to the feminine. For this reason that Virgilian character says: *Numeros memini si uerba tenerem*, which means, 'I remember the aria but not the words' and thus taking the most important part (*numeros*) for the whole in the absence of a specific word. It follows from this that when Proclus [and Suda add. in marg.] define the *Nomos* a very ancient type of sung poem, in this way: [tropos tis melodias harmonian ekhon takton kai rhythmon horismenon add. in marg.], namely, 'a certain sort of song which had a particular melody and a determined rhythm,' we would define it albeit briefly in our language by saying that it is a sort of hymn or chant with a specific *aria*. Secondly, I take as given that different verses and every sort of rhythm are born of an orderly mixture or sequence of long and short units of time, the latter of which correspond to half of the former, although this does not produce great variety because there

can be long and, similarly, short units of time of variable length. This is why Marius Victorinus said that [[Thersandros, when, is written with the [eta] [eta]]] musicians accepted that 'certain syllables could be shorter than a short one and others longer than a long one,' while the Greek grammarians distinguish the syllables into short, long and of medium length, the latter of which they call irrational. Thus, they ascribe a unit of time to the vowels that are naturally short, [-<f.38v>-] two units to the long ones and half to each consonant that 'is not fused,' as the Romans say, with another one. It follows, therefore, that, if two consonants, that are not a mute and a liquid one, follow a short vowel, both the Greeks and the Romans consider that syllable to be a long one. Moreover, if such consonants follow a long vowel, as Victorinus notes in this word [Thersandros], such syllable is much longer than a simple long syllable because it contains at least three units of time. Thirdly, I take as given, as the Greek grammarians do, that an acute accent lengthens the vowel by half a unit of time. For instance, if I say [elthemen], although it is a dactyl just as this one [elthomen], nevertheless the first syllable of the second word is longer than the corresponding one in the first one, while the syllable [tho] is shorter than the syllable [the]. Fourthly, I take as given, that in Latin much more than in Greek, the acute accent (under which I also class the circumflex because it is a mixture of the acute and grave accent) is not only associated with long syllables, but it often occurs in the short ones, as one can see clearly. Fifthly, I presume the pronunciation of the Latin and Greek languages, and perhaps of others that are lost nowadays, to be very different from the pronunciation of modern our modern languages, Italian, French [and Spanish add. supra lin.] because the former recognised the difference between long and short vowels that is lost in our tongues, since our vowels are all short. Hence, their pronunciation must have turned out to be more majestic and grand. Although [-<f.39r>-] some believe that it is impossible nowadays to retrace such pronunciation, I disagree, since it seems to me impossible to doubt that when the ancients uttered the word

*Musa*

in the nominative and in the ablative, in the first instance they pronounced the vowel a within an indivisible unit of time, as we do nowadays, possibly for instance in this way, Musà, while in the ablative it was uttered within a unit of time that could be divided into two, thus:

*Musa,*

similarly to the lengthening of the same repeated vowel, as in the case of Mij (derived from Mi) which then acquired the aspiration because the long vowel was divided into two short ones, and it began to be written Mihi, because of the difficulty that can be heard in when two identical consecutive vowels are uttered without that strengthening of the breath that is called aspiration. I believe to have proved this sufficiently elsewhere by comparing also other modern languages that retain some trace of these long vowels. Sixthly, I take for certain that even in today's languages there are syllables that are long by nature, such as the diphthongs, aside from the vowels that are long because of their position, but I do not believe that there are simple vowels that cover two units of time. As a consequence of the lack of this variety of vowels, I believe that the rhythm of our verses is based only on the accents which also constitute the verses, and that the accented syllables are considered to be long and correspond to them. Conversely, the ones that follow the accented syllables are short, especially if the accent falls on the third last syllable, while the rest are short or indifferent length, since the lengthening produced by two or more consonants is largely ignored. [For this reason the efforts of those who have tried to restore the verses measured according to ancient prosody in the tree languages derived from the decaying of Latin, namely, Spanish, Italian and French, must be regarded as unsuccessful, because one can hear in practice that they do not succeed. Conversely, the idea of those who wanted to compose Latin verses by observing only the accents and thus following the modern way instead of restoring the pronunciation of the ancients, is a barbaric idea. So varied is sometimes is the opinion of individual persons. add. in marg.] Seventhly. I presume that although ancient musicians [-<f.39v>-] measured every small unit of time of the spoken voice to perfection, as we have seen earlier with regard to consonances, nevertheless they must not have attended to such minutiae in the composition of their melodies. Strong evidence of this is provided by the fact that they had specific rhythmic signs representing several time

signatures, as I observed elsewhere, contrary to the common opinion of modern writers who do not believe that they had any other notion of time apart from the ones linked to language and metre. Eighthly, I suppose that it was not permitted in singing to shorten syllables that were naturally long and to utter them as a simple and indivisible unit as the short ones, just as it was not allowed in spoken language. In fact, had someone pronounced the word *Musa* in the ablative case as it is pronounced in the nominative, as it is common nowadays, they would have been censured and considered uncultured and ignorant. 9. I presume that the ancients, who only sang poems, observed the measure of long and short syllables whose orderly sequence constitutes the cadence of the verse, otherwise it would have been redundant to create so many subtle distinctions of feet and other similar minutiae. In fact, albeit the most learned Salinas appears to believe that the ancients lengthened and shortened the syllables according to their whim, as they do nowadays, on the basis of some passage of Marius Victorinus, where he says *through the turn of phrase of lengthened pronunciation*, nevertheless, those words do not prove this, but only that, when they sang, they lengthened [-<f.40r>-] the units of time of the vowels commonly used in simple speech, as it occurs in the singing of every nation. Nevertheless, it would have been possible to maintain unchanged some ratio between the short and long syllable that would preserve the cadence of the metre. X. I presume that it was allowed not only to subdivide a minim into two semiminims and into four quavers, but also to alter in some way the ratio between the long and the short syllables when it was required for some particular aim, like to embellish the singing by removing a certain dryness (which is similar to the effect that paintings too detailed in their finish produce) that would have caused the ear little pleasure.

XI. I presume that, when modern composers set Latin verses, almost none of them observe their true and straight pronunciation. This derives in the first place from the fact that very few of them are aware of it, and, secondly, because they follow throughout the current and corrupted pronunciation and utter them exactly as if they were Italian verses. This also occurs because they believe that, if they acted differently, their settings would prove lacking in melodic allure. XII. I presume that this habit produces many instances of clumsiness and many errors, one of which is that certain sorts of verse become indistinguishable from other types which are totally distinct. In fact, if, for instance, modern composers set this verse *Pange lingua gloriosi*, invariably they will shorten the first syllable [-<40v>-] because the customary pronunciation compels them to do so. Therefore, this verse shall result similar to this one *Ag<e> cuncta nuptiali*, although that one is trochaic and this one <aliqua desunt>

[[Similarly, if that anapaestic verse *Iuditha Syris iuncta phalangibus* is set to music correctly as Soriano did with the syllable *Sy* as a long, it will be legitimate to confuse it because of the accent with this other Alcaic verse *Odii profanum uulgum et arceo*, as it is a mixture of iambic and dactylic but has a very different lilt.]]

[Similarly, one finds certain verses which, because of certain common syllables, can be of different types. For instance, this one *Non ultra terras appeto: quaero polum*, where, if the third syllable is shortened and the seventh and ninth are lengthened, it will become a iambic trimeter. Conversely, if the third is lengthened while the two above are shortened, it will become Elegiac. Therefore, who does not want to mistake often a verse for another one will have to observe the quantity of the syllables and, especially, of the vowels that are long by nature. add. in marg.] XIII. I presume that failing to observe the quantity of the syllables corrupts the good pronunciation and the particular cadence of the verse more in some places and less in others. In fact, for instance, if in this anapaestic verse *Saltatricis uota puellae* the second syllable is pronounced short as per normal, one can hear that the verse is marked by a pronounced limp. However, if it is pronounced with a long vowel by almost doubling it, namely, substituting a dactyl for a spondee in this way *salta atricis*, then it will display to the ear its appropriate time and measure. On the contrary, in our current pronunciation the word *salta* is uttered not as a spondee or a dactyl, but as a trochee, and for this reason it sounds wrong. However, if the syllable *uo* of the word *uota* is pronounced as a short syllable, this does not offend the ear so much, but, on the contrary, it appears tolerable. [Also, to

provide an example of iambic verses, note how this verse *Victor feroces impetus primos habet* sounds fuller and correct in timing if the o of the word *primos* is pronounced as a long vowel, in the old way, rather than as a short one, as our contemporaries do. add. in marg.] XIV. I presume that the almost infinite variety of verses used by the Greeks first and by the Romans later enriches considerably the melodies [-<f.41r>-] by sharing with them their great variety of *arie*, which would hardly come to the mind of musicians without the help of poetry. This is one of the arguments that prove the superiority of the music of the ancients compared to our own. XV. I presume that rests or silences may substitute the lengthening of the syllables that should be long but are not, as Saint Augustin taught in his *Music* (where he deals with the topic from a very grammatical point of view because he was not familiar with the Greek authors who wrote about the doctrine of rhythm with the greatest inquisitiveness and subtlety) and Salinas after him, although it does not seem appropriate to me to introduce rests in places where the meaning of the text does not require it. XVI. I presume that, since it is the choice of the poet to place a short or a long syllable as the last one in the verse, according to what suits him best, although the opposite is required by the rational structure of the verse, thus the musician can lengthen it or shorten it according to one's will, as one prefers. In fact, since one can do so also where leave to do so is not allotted to the poet, this will be even more true in the case of the final syllables, which are left to his judgement. Some will believe perhaps that this is a consequence of the time that intervenes between a verse and the following one, but it is not so. In fact, apart from the fact that this reason would support only the lengthening of short syllables and not the shortening of long ones, Pindar's Odes are written [-<f.41v>-] in such a way that it would not matter much if they were written without being divided into verses, as if they were prose, were it not because of the correspondence of strophe and antistrophe. In fact, if the metres are compared correctly, one notes consistently that the poet did not choose those verses specifically but employed them in the way in which they came to his mind, since that sort of poetry is a kind of metric prose. Moreover, this is also clear from the frequent truncation of the words which occurs in many of his odes because of their division into verses. I would say, therefore, that, save for the arising of a better opinion, this free and arbitrary mutation in the quantity of the last syllable must have been introduced [firstly, because in the perfect terminations of the melodies that are called cadences and in the phrases of the text, the penultimate syllable is taken into consideration, rather than the last, and secondly, add. in marg.] as a mere licence and to facilitate the compositional process. For this reason, it concerns the musician even more. Consequently, in those verses that are composed of two, such as the elegiac, there is no difference in writing them whole, as it is customary, or in half-verses. In the first way, the syllable that creates the caesura is always long, and in the second one it would be either long or short at the poet's will. XVII. I presume that, as Aristotle and the other music writers teach us, all the feet (which are quantitative parts of the metre) derive from the first three proportions. The first one is the one of equality, where the time is divided evenly into upbeat and downbeat (which the Greeks call *arsis* and *thesis*) and contain the ones that are divided into two equal parts, such as the pyrric, the spondee, the dactyl, the anapaestic etcetera. The second one is the dupla proportion, where half of the foot is always twice as long as the other, as in the case of the iambus, the trochee, the tribrach, the Ionic ones etcetera. The third one is the hemiolic or sesquialtera, which comprehends the feet that are divided in this way, and not otherwise, so that a part or half of the foot contains two units of time and the other one three, such as in the cretic, the paeon, the bacchius and so on. The remaining feet, such as the epitrite and the amphibrach, are not very suited to poetry and music and are excluded as a rule from every sort of metre or rhythm. XVIII. I presume that the simple and most ancient verses (called by the Greeks [prototypous]) such as those, I say, that are composed of the same proportion of feet, like the pure iambics, the ones composed of dactylics, the trochaics, the paeons, the Ionics etcetera, differ mostly from the compounded and derivative ones, such as the Sapphics, Asclepiadeans, elegiacs, tragic verses etcetera in that those must be beaten, measured and divided by a similar sort of subdivision, which is the one that corresponds to their own rhythm, while these can be adapted more freely to different subdivisions and variety of units of time, not only by comparing a verse to another verse, but a part of it to another part. XIX. I presume that in antiquity the bar started from the upbeat, or

*arsis*, while, on the contrary, nowadays it starts from the downbeat, and that the short syllables are more successful on the upbeat and the long ones on the downbeat. Consequently, just as modern composers write some rests before the beat in the iambic rhythms, the ancients did the same ([which is perhaps what Aristides Quintilianus calls [prothesis] add. in marg.] in the trochaic rhythms, where they placed some rest or silence corresponding to the *arsis* or upbeat. Of these two methods, the ancient one was more comfortable, more natural and [-<f.42v>-] more rational, because it seems more appropriate that the foot or the hand should be at rest before starting its task, rather than suspended in the air, and that it should finish on a downbeat rather than being lifted in the air. XX. I presume that, just as certain verses are divided or measured by the ancient Grammarians *per monopodiam*, or by assigning a foot to each bar, and others *per dipodiam* or *syzigiam*, or by coupling two of them at once, the musician did and should do the same in setting them to music, as the same principle stands, which consists in reciting the lower ones at a lower pitch and more slowly and the lighter ones more speedily, and in subdividing the bar in proportionate and correct sections. It follows that the trochees and the iambi were measured two by two, and thus the iambic senarius, which is their correct and exact verse, was called *trimeter*, which means 'of three measures' in Greek, while the heroic dactylic verses were measured according to the number of the feet, so that the heroic is called senarius and hexameter, which means 'of six measures or downbeats'. This is so logical that even modern musicians follow the principle that, when the number of syllables or notes within a bar is larger, they are uttered more quickly, and, conversely, when there are fewer notes, they are uttered more slowly.

For instance, in the binary measure which consists of two semibreves and is notated thus [Crvd] the semiminims correspond nearly always to the speed of the quavers in the measure of a semibreve notated thus [C], which is more common nowadays. Therefore, one should rest assured that, [-<f.43r>-] as a rule, the syllables of the heroic verses are uttered by singing more slowly than in the case of the iambi and of the trochees. Someone perhaps will find it strange to read what I said earlier, namely, that the anapaestic verses were divided similarly *per dipodiam*, although they correspond to the dactylic verses in their units of time. However, I believe to be able to put forward a well-grounded and plausible explanation of this fact, which is this one. It seems very likely to me that, of the main four kinds of verses, dactylic, anapaestic, iambic and trochaic, the first ones, as they are more poised and they are usually applied to more serious subjects, were performed more slowly than the second ones corresponding to them, as the latter were applied to lighter topics and were used mainly when the chorus walked about. Similarly, the third ones, although they are the similar in units of time to the fourth ones, they were sung normally slower than the latter ones, which were normally used in dances and ballets. For this reason, Aristotle appears to hint to this when in his Poetics he says that the chorus, when stationary, sang without trochee and anapaestic verses. Therefore, although trochaic and iambic verses apply the same measure and bar, nevertheless this must be faster in the first ones and slower in the other ones, just as it must be faster, or more tight, as they say nowadays in the anapaestic than in the dactylic verses, even if this is achieved in those by ascribing an entire couple of feet to each bar. XXI I presume that where the ancient grammarians talk about measuring or subdividing [-<f.43v>-] the verses more in one way than in another one, we should not interpret this as referring always to the musical bar, nor should we always imitate them in practice, but always where their words match the practice in rationality and ease. For instance maintains that the choriambic foot (which, because of the different measure of the units of time and of their disposition, can be divided according to the proportion of equality or according to the dupla) should be measured with the equal bar. Nevertheless, because our experience shows that this foot corresponds very well to the time units of the common galliard, which is measured much better with the double measure (which nowadays we call tripla, but improperly) than with the equal measure, I would believe that we should not follow what he says. I stated that the common galliard is measured better with the unequal bar, because the Roman one, which is also a type of galliard, is also measured better with the unequal bar, although it could be measured with the equal bar as well. As for the rest, the iambic rhythm can be seen in many modern compositions, such as in the *correnti* and in the French *moresca*, which starts with the words *Debin*

*qui separez*, just as the trochaic rhythm can be seen very clearly in the dances called *volte*. XXII I presume that our current way to notate the subdivisions of the rhythm originates many imperfections and difficulties in adjusting the units of time and the feet of the Latin verses together, with particular regard to that rule so accepted that the note that follows the dot must be of the same of the value as the [-<f.44r>-] dot, although many rules have been discarded as irrelevant with good reason by the composers who write in recitative style. Nevertheless, by obeying these rules as well, I believe that it is possible to express any foot or verse with our rhythmic signs, as it shall be illustrated further on.

[-<f.44v>-] I shall continue this discourse on the basis of these observation and I would like to consider in some detail, if Vostra Signoria agrees, what rules should be observed nowadays if one wants to set to music Latin verses with good judgement and reason. I shall examine first, therefore, whether one should follow the flow of the current corrupted practice, as it is the opinion of some, among whom are persons of good taste and judgement, or whether one should rise above the common practice and observe the true and ancient way to pronounce the sung text. Those persons found their opinion on the fact that, since nowadays a contrary practice predominates, therefore, who adopts a different style not only would be derided, but would compose his music or melodies in a way that lack gracefulness and is unpleasant to hear. However, to speak freely, it seems to me that these persons are very much in the wrong. In fact, apart from the fact that, were their opinion to be predominant, no discipline would be reduced to its principles, I believe that a noble soul should not refrain from acting appropriately for fear of an ignorant and malign public opinion, especially where envy is predominant and anyone condemns passionately in someone else what they cannot reach because of their lack of ability or knowledge. As to the fact that the composition becomes unpleasant and less melodically captivating because of this observance of the rules, this is the opposite of the truth. On the contrary, in fact, they shall become more graceful, as long as the composition is written with mastery and good judgement, as experience will show (whenever it happens) that this artistry is found in a person who is sufficiently endowed with the sort of erudition and perceptiveness that is required in this sort of enterprise. I do confess that [-<f.45r>-] an excessively strict and scrupulous observance of the rules would not produce very pleasing results, as, for instance, if the same notes were assigned to the long and short syllables and the same proportion of the units of time, but it is not necessary to do this either, nor did the ancients advised it. In my opinion, the greatest difficulty consists in accommodating the short syllables that carry the acute accent. In fact, if they are uttered as short syllables in every respect, the pronunciation will be unidiomatic, as the acute accent will be pushed to the last syllable, which is something that composers avoid more than anything else. On this subject, I want to tell Vostra Signoria what happened years ago to one of these second-rate contraputists. I had one of my friends, who was an extremely good composer as well a being versed in every sort of humanistic studies, set a few Asclepiadean verses of mine, as well as some by Seneca. This one was among the others: *Occidimus aures pepulit Hymenaeus meas*. This contraputist started to sing them and, in order to discredit my work because of pure envy, placed so little accent on the syllable *me* of the word *meas* that it seemed really as if he was pronouncing *meàs*. At that point I could not but lose my patience, so I took the music from him and told him that it didn't say *meàs*, but *meàsino* (my donkey). Moreover, as proof of what I said (that not only the observance of the metre does not reduce but increases the gracefulness of the compositions, and renders them more melodically attractive) Vostra Signoria should know that I had the same composer set the same Asclepiadean verses that begin *Salve Sceptrigerum maxime Principum* [-<f.45v>-] to different music but following the scansion of the corrupted pronunciation in use nowadays, and that I showed both settings to Don Romano Micheli, a most accomplished composer and pupil of Soriani's without mentioning anything about their difference. I simply requested his opinion as to which one he deemed more beautiful. Without much deliberation he indicated that the one following the rules was the best one, although he did not recognise it as the setting that followed the rules. I do not provide further demonstrations because they would be redundant in the case of Vostra Signoria, whose exquisite judgement and profound understanding would remedy them, if they were lacking. As to those that

persist in their ignorance, any number of demonstrations and witness statements that I would ever be able to produce would never be sufficient.

[I refrain from mentioning others who believe that these considerations on the feet and on the syllables are pedantic and puerile (possibly because one hears them mentioned only in the schools nowadays) since these unfortunate persons do not know that the feet are involved in every sort of rhythm, whether vocal or instrumental, and especially in the case of drums and other similar instruments used in war. However, if modern theorists do not talk about them, this is not a sign that they found another simpler and more expedite method (which is impossible) but because they have not dealt with this topic with sufficient depth. Anyone who does not believe me should teach me a little what explanation is more easy and immediate, to say that the rhythm of the heroic verse consists of six dactylic and spondaic feet, employed as one prefers, and of a final spondee, or if it is easier to say that it should have this and this number of syllable, of which the first and the last two have to be long, the second and also the third may be short or long etcetera, and that a short syllable can be flanked by two long ones and other such matters that one would have to heed if one were not to mention the feet? add. in marg.]

Let us return now to where we left off and let us continue our reasoning on the syllables that carry an accent. I state that the act of lengthening them because of those accents cannot but produce good effects. I deduce this from some reasons that seem to me very plausible. First of these is the authority of Greek grammarians, who, as we mentioned above in passing, say that the acute accent lengthens the syllable by half a unit of time. The second reason derives from the fact that we see that the elegiac verse produces an excellent sound, as long as the acute accent falls always either on the penultimate syllable (which occurs in Latin authors when the last word is formed of two syllables) or on the third last syllable, both of whom [-<f.46r>-] are short. The second reason consists in the fact that we know that the verses called by the Greeks [hyporrhithmoi] which one could translate under-rhythmic such as this one *Aurea scribis carmina Iuli maxime uatum* do not turn out better than the others but worse, although the accent in them falls on the long syllables. It does not seem to me that we should follow Glareanus, who thought that the pentameter was softened by lengthening the penultimate syllable so he composed it in this way, because this deprives it of most of its natural lilt. Instead, we must follow the middle path and let that accent be heard a little, thus preserving with it some of the proportion of the long syllables with the short ones. In fact, I cannot approve at all the opinion of those who have no scruples in pushing the accent forward in the belief that the ancients did so as well. In fact, if singing has to imitate the spoken voice, since in Latin there are hardly any occasions when the last syllable carries the acute accent when speaking, why should it be so when singing? I know that many learned scholars (among whom was Signor Aleandro b.m.) believe that the Greeks at least followed this practice, namely, that when one recited or sung some verses, the accents were assigned to the long syllables, in this way, for instance

[Menin Aeide thea Peleideo [Akhillees add. in marg.]].

However, such opinion (and may this be said without offence of those who are learned) is completely implausible for several reason that I overlook at present, but for this one most of all, namely, that Greek accents are known to be so stable that they is preserved even in the names of Italian cities whose ownership they lost many centuries ago, as in the case of Otranto, Taranto etcetera. Therefore, it is possible [-<f.46v>-] to preserve the appropriate shortness in syllable that carry the accent and let the strength of that accent be heard, especially with the assistance of certain precautions such as these. The first one consists in the fact that the syllable that follows the short one with the accent should fall in tone rather than rise, or, at least, it should remain on the same note, because in this way the accent will be highlighted, as it should be. The second predicates that that syllable may be lengthened somewhat because of said accent, especially if the previous and following syllables will be held a little longer as they are long, as in this verse *Quicumque regno fidit et magna potens*, where the syllable *po* could be pronounced as a semiminim (although

ordinarily we should assign a quaver to the short syllable) when the preceding syllable *gna* were to be pronounced as a minim. However, if another short syllable follows a short accented syllable, as, for instance, in the word *tulit* of this verse *Me uidet et te Troia: non umquam tulit*, in that case they shall be arranged more easily because, although the first one is lengthened to a considerable extent, nevertheless one will be able to utter both of them within two units of time that are equivalent to a long syllable, as it shall be seen further on in the examples. The third precaution shall allow us to balance the matter with a tie between notes through an anticipation that shall solve a long syllable into two short ones. Thus, this verse:

[Discourse on the rhythmic composition of Latin verses and on the melody of Greek tragic choruses, 46v, 1; text: *optatusque dies*]

could be set in this fashion in order to preserve the quantities

[Discourse on the rhythmic composition of Latin verses and on the melody of Greek tragic choruses, 46v, 2; text: *optatusque dies*].

[<47r>-] The fourth precaution concerns the third last syllables when they are short and accented, as, for instance, in the case of the trisyllable word like *dominus* or of polysyllabic ones like *continuus*, where one can follow the practice of shortening the following penultimate, as before, while preserving in both the proportion of two short syllables and a long one. For instance I shall ascribe these lengths to the word

[Discourse on the rhythmic composition of Latin verses and on the melody of Greek tragic choruses, 47r, 1; text: *Dominus*],

and these to the word

[Discourse on the rhythmic composition of Latin verses and on the melody of Greek tragic choruses, 47r, 2; text: *Dominos*],

while I shall mark the word *continuus* in this way:

[Discourse on the rhythmic composition of Latin verses and on the melody of Greek tragic choruses, 47r, 3; text: *Continuus*].

Nevertheless, I confess that it shall be difficult that the singer will observe this exactness religiously without much study and experience because of the resistance that an ingrained bad habit usually displays. A fifth useful instruction is to pronounce the word that contains the accented short syllable as jointly as possible to the following word, so that the acute accent is lost. Here is an example. To avoid lengthening the syllable *ru* of the word *rude* in this verse *Non rude uulgus lachrymisque nomina*, I shall not join said word with the preceding one, but with the one that follows, which is *uulgus*, although the quality of the verse appears to suggest the opposite, namely, that the word *rude* should be joined to the word *Non* to form a dactylic (*Non rude*) instead of an anapaestic foot (*Rude uul*). This observation is supported by the Greek practice of changing the acute accent of the final syllables to the grave one, when they are contained within the flow of the sentence and not at the end of a section or colon. In fact, although, for instance, the word [theos] is pronounced with the acute accent when it stands by itself, namely, with the acute accent in the last syllable, [-f.47v-] if it is followed by another word, as in the expression [theos hemon], because the two are joined into one in a way, it is pronounced with the grave accent, which belongs to all the syllables that do not carry the acute or circumflex one, albeit it is marked only in the last syllables. I like to believe that all the discrepancies that can arise between the quantity of the syllables and the

accents can be remedied with these precautions, especially if we use the ones that are more useful to us. Now I want to put forward some rhythms randomly as they will come to mind, which will be not be of little use to composers. In order to allow the natural lilt of the verse to be heard, be sure to lay out the bars to its feet or true measures and progressions (the Greeks call them [baseis]) so that they are not broken but their beginnings and ends coincide with them. For instance, the anapaestic verse will have to be measured within two bars or progressions, which will be best, or within four, according to the number of the feet (but more swiftly than in the heroic verse) rather than within one and a half or three and a half etcetera. Moreover, I used the term true measures to exclude certain strange ones documented by the Greek authors more at their own whim than for any good reason, except perhaps to avoid any caesura and render equal the parts or the divisions. However, this does not appear to be the case in many of the ones that they put forward. For instance, Victorinus <aliqua desunt>

[-<f.48r>-] moreover, since the same verses can be measured and divided according to other better know feet which are easier to practise within the bar, such as dactyls, spondees and anapests, iambi, trochaei etcetera, I cannot think of what advantage will be achieved by dividing them in this way. In order to allow greater variety to be heard when many verses of the same type follow one another, as in the choruses of the mentioned tragedy, it will be possible to speed up or slow down the bar according to the need of the words. It will be also possible to allow some *passaggetti*, although not too frequent and long, as well as other vocal ornaments and graces, especially in certain more exposed parts of the verse [[that can be called junctures]] as, for instance, in the penultimate syllable of the heroic verse and in the third last of the iambic senarius. As to caesuras, if the syllable is short and the sense complete or nearly complete, I would not abstain from maintaining the syllable short where that pronunciation appears more pleasant, although the metre requires it to be long, since it is possible to remedy this with some silence or a rest of equivalent length. For instance in this verse by Virgil *Omnia vincit amor: et nos cedamus amori*, where he allowed himself this licence doubtlessly for this reason. However, when the caesura occurs after a long syllable, if the syllable is long because of the nature of its vowel, I shall not refrain from lengthening it twice as much as the others to arrange the downbeats more satisfactorily, especially if the vowel is of the more sonorous kind such as A, E and O, and if the sense is complete or almost complete, as we shall see [-<f.48v>-] later on in the examples of the Asclepiadean verses. Where it appears that the anapest is used instead of the iambus, I would have no problem to constitute it with the same note values as those of the latter one. For instance, if I assign a semiminim to the first syllable of the iambus and a minim to the second one, I shall assign a quaver each to the two short ones of the anapaestic, as in these verses by Claudianus *Age cuncta nuptiali Redimita uere tellus*. I would do the same in the case of trochaic verses, where the dactyl substitutes the trochee. [The syllables that have a vowel that is naturally long must not be shortened in any way or uttered under an indivisible unit of time, wherever they are, either at the end of verses or elsewhere, despite the fact that nowadays they are spoken in this way. Moreover, if there is one chief difference between the settings that are learned and orderly, and those that are trivial and common, this has to be the one, and this is something in which we can distinguish ourselves from the populace without fear of being too individual, because this individuality shall generate a great achievement of gravity and a style of singing that is truly Latin. It is true, however, that many syllables cannot be distinguished nowadays, for instance the ones that have their position joined to others, because they are not supported by the example of the ancient poets. Nevertheless, if there are some whose vowel cannot be distinguished into long or short – and perhaps there will be many – thanks to the rule of derivation or because of their Greek origin, then it will be legitimate for anyone to take them as they want, but with judgement and distinction. In fact, who would be able to know nowadays, for instance that the word *insanus* was pronounced with the short I and that the word *lustrum*, when it means \_\_\_\_\_, has a short *u*, but when it means a period of five years has the *u* long, had Cicero and Festus not written about it? add. in marg.] However, do let us come to the tragic verses although their rhythm, to be precise, is the one of the third epitrite that was called Rhodian, from the name of the Rhodians, when they

marched in formation and it corresponds to these note values:

[Discourse on the rhythmic composition of Latin verses and on the melody of Greek tragic choruses, 48v, 1].

Nevertheless, because this sort of sesquiterza bar is not accepted by musicians, whether ancient or modern, being extremely difficult to observe, and because sometimes the diiambus or double iambus is used in its place, I would think it more appropriate to divide them into six bars, whatever the grammarians say, mixing the equal or binary with the unequal or ternary when one encounters in them feet of four units of time, in this way:

[Discourse on the rhythmic composition of Latin verses and on the melody of Greek tragic choruses, 48v, 2],

or whenever such frequent change should result too difficult, in the following manner or in other similar ways, respectively:

[Discourse on the rhythmic composition of Latin verses and on the melody of Greek tragic choruses, 48v, 3; text: Quicumque regno fidit et magna potest, Dominatur aula; nec leues metuit Daes, Me uideat et te Troia: non umquam tulit, Documenta sors maiora quam fragili loco starent superbi:].

[-<f.49r>-] Albeit some of these rhythmic distributions are very difficult, this is no reason to reject them, because, since it is current practice to sing on stage without a strict beat, it is not necessary to observe them as strictly as they are notated, but one should try to approach them as much as one can, which is entrusted to the judgement of the discerning stage performer. The anapaestic ones can be pronounced and notated with the following rhythms:

[Discourse on the rhythmic composition of Latin verses and on the melody of Greek tragic choruses, 49r, 1; text: Non rude uulgus lachrymisque nouum],

or in this way with some ties and alteration of the metre

[Discourse on the rhythmic composition of Latin verses and on the melody of Greek tragic choruses, 49r, 2; text: Lugere iubes: hoc continuus].

As to the Sapphic ones, if we want to ascribe to them their note values, in the first, fourth and fifth foot, as they are trochee, we shall place the unequal measure and the equal one in the other two. However, should we want to even out the measures, one will be able to mark them thus:

[Discourse on the rhythmic composition of Latin verses and on the melody of Greek tragic choruses, 49r, 3; text: Dulce moerenti populus dolentum].

[-<f.49v>-] If we want to divide the Asclepiadean verse into equal bars consisting of dactyls and spondees rather than in other more far-fetched ways, we shall be able to mark it thus in the places where the sense reaches a complete or almost complete ending:

[Discourse on the rhythmic composition of Latin verses and on the melody of Greek tragic choruses, 49v, 1; text: Et tristes cineres urna coeruit:].

However, where the sense is incomplete, as the bar cannot be completed adequately with bars, then it will be possible to assign a double unit of time to the syllable that produces the caesura, thus:

[Discourse on the rhythmic composition of Latin verses and on the melody of Greek tragic choruses, 49v, 2; text: Verum est an timidus fabula decipit,].

This will prove to be even better, because the long syllables occur on the downbeat and the short ones on the upbeat.

I overlook the other sorts of verses that do not appear in this tragedy because I have hopes to deal with them more diligently in future. As for the rest, the aforesaid expression *Verum est* offers me the chance to discuss at some length the encounters between vowels called *synalephe* by the grammarians. The question consists in whether, when a word ends with a vowel and another follows that begins also with a vowel, as in this case *Excisa ferro est*, the first vowel should be elided and the words should be pronounced *ferr' est*, or both of them should be pronounced as they are and as they are pronounced in everyday speech. The practice of the ancient Greeks in this matter is very clear, because we see that they did not write the words that they did not want to be pronounced, as in this case [nykhth' holo]. [-<f.50r>-] As to the Romans, one may have some doubts, especially with regard to the earliest period, when this language, that maintained itself still pure and in full control of itself, received also some strange mutation, because the letter *s* in the last syllables was removed when there followed words that started with a consonant, as in this case

Conversely, the letter *m* was preserved, as in this verse by Ennius

Insignita tum fere millia militum octo.

However, if Vostra Signoria asks me what I would do, I would reply that until I find some greater clarity on these matters in some author, I would do this: I would allow both vowels to be heard to avoid departing from our current practice needlessly and to avoid many amphibologies that would derive from it, especially if the same proportion of the units within the metre can be maintained, because this is nothing but dividing a long syllable into two short ones. I would observe this conduct even more when both the vowels happen to be long or at least when the first one is. In fact, if the first is a short one and it belongs to words where there cannot occur any ambiguity of sense, as in certain adverbs and conjunctions, while the second one starts with a long vowel, perhaps in certain passages I would not have any problem with eliding the preceding vowel. [Similarly, in this example *Atque ea diuersa penitus dum parte geruntur*, where the same vowel is repeated, it is common practice to avoid one, although it is not known which one. add. in marg.] Here one must pay particular attention to the aspiration and to the diphthongs. When the second word starts with an aspirated vowel, especially if it is a long one, such as in this example

because such [-<f.50v>-] aspiration creates an excessive gap in the pronunciation, I would consider it appropriate to elide the previous vowel, since it can be done without compromising the meaning, being pronounced thus . It is no use to say that aspiration is not pronounced, because it should be pronounced. Moreover, it is pronounced in many countries by those who live beyond the Alps, and a clear abuse does not constitute law. Also, when it begins or ends in a diphthong as in this case

or it both ends and begins with it as in this expression *gratae aerae*, since triphthongues and quadriphthongs do not exist in Latin and such pronunciation of three or four vowels joined together tightly is unpleasant and unmusical, it is certain that some of them will have to be elided, but the issue revolves around finding which to elide and how to do it. I am confident that in this verse by Virgil *Sub Iulio alto* the letter *o* and the letter *a* should both be heard, but the former must be shortened and must be uttered as a single unit of time so that a dactyl may be heard. However, there is no doubt that all the vowels, namely the *ae* of the first word and the *i* of the second must be heard in the passage beginning with these words *Insulae Ionio in magno*, not only because the diphthong *ae* corresponds to the Greek *ai*, which is short at the end of words, but also because none of those vowels can be elided without producing great confusion. In fact, if the *i* is removed, one syllable would be eliminated, while if the *e* is taken away the word from plural would become singular, while if the *a* [-<f.51r>-] stops being uttered, it would be pronounced no more as a diphthong, but as a single vowel, as in the modern pronunciation. At the beginning of this verse *Dardanidae e muris*, if the diphthong is pronounced as it stands so that the *a* and the *e* are heard, the

following *e* can be removed with confidence in order to avoid that *hiatus*, as it is called in Latin, or it can be heard to highlight the expressive character of the text. In this incipit *Diuumque aeterna potestas*, it is best to remove the enclitic *que*, because these kind of words lose their last vowels easily and in this passage there is no ambiguity whatsoever. However, in this other beginning of verse *Intentique ora tenebant*, the matter appears ambiguous. In fact, if the letter *e* is removed, the units of time within the metre are preserved if the *o* is pronounced long, as it must be; if the *e* is maintained, the pronunciation of the *o* within a single unit of time, as it is customary nowadays, becomes more tolerable. However, in this other beginning *Conticuere omnes*, one can observe something more interesting, namely, if the *e* is elided, the verse appears to be limping, which springs from the fact that, when these two words are joined into one with the bond of a single accent (the one on the word *omnes*, because the one on the word *conticuere* is lost) if the syllable *er* is not lengthened by doubling the unit of time of the vowel *e* (which is something few will trust themselves to do) a single iamb *er óm* be heard instead of a spondee. However, if the *e* is preserved untouched, then the lilt of the metre shall be heard in its entirety, because it will appear, to the ear at least, as the anapaest *ere óm*. Therefore, either that penultimate *e* [-<51v>-] must be pronounced as a long if the last syllable is removed, or the latter must be left complete, in which case, if that one is pronounced only by lengthening the accent, as it is customary nowadays, it will not be very appropriate for the aforesaid reason. Conversely, if the vowel is lengthened as the ancients did, this will be preferable. Moreover, what shall we say of the words that end with the letter *m* when the next one begins with a vowel, which clearly renders the verse limp, according to our current pronunciation. Consider this verse, for instance, *Litora multum ille et terris iactatus et alto*, which appears really lengthened by a syllable and, consequently, deformed and exceeding its metric form. The solution is easy, if we follow the doctrine of the ancients. In fact, the most diligent Quintilian (who, as a writer, is extremely fastidious) teaches us that the ancients used to pronounce this letter a little at the end of words, when they read, although it was considered otherwise of gross and barbaric sound. For this reason many used to write it halved, thus [signum], to show that it should have to be pronounced lightly and almost midway between the *n* and the *m*. Therefore, we must believe that, when the verses were recited and sung, it was left out as if it was not written, while the pronunciation of the previous vowel was preserved intact, in this way *Multu' ille in terris*. In my opinion, this rule must be observed absolutely, following the example of those who were in a position to codify the laws [-<51v>-] of this language which was modern and natural in their day. This holds all the more true, because this represents a compromise between those who deface the verse by uttering everything, and those who cloud the feeling of it by cutting out more than it is necessary, as one would do by pronouncing *Mult' ill' et terris* etcetera. [I would maintain that this also holds when an aspirate vowel follows the letter *m*, as in this case *Monstrum horrendum informe ingens* etcetera. add. in marg.] This is what I need to say at present with regard to the adjustment of the quantities of the Latin verses.

As to the handling of the ensemble and of the melodies in the choruses, since this is the specific topic of our discourse, it is necessary to say first of all that the manner held so-far by modern composers and performers is utterly removed from the practice in use in antiquity and devoid of any advantage. In fact, while most composers break the thread of the melody and of the discourse with those imitations, repetitions and juxtapositions of different words that the Greeks call [palilogias] and [polylogias], on the contrary, if one wants the words to be understood well and without losing an iota, as it is absolutely necessary, and that the melody to be inspired and dance-like (which can be done also when the subject matter is serious) rather than languid and enervated, as it is mostly in the style of the madrigals, one must have all the words sung by everyone together at the same time. This is all the more important because tragic choruses must be danced or walked rhythmically and acted out with the gestures that are felt in the melody, which is something that increases the energy vigour of the music [-<f.52v>-] much more than one can hear in the style of madrigals, that differ from this almost in the same way that a dead body differs from a living one, because in this style the structure of rhythm is so confused by those opposing and very different movements that there can hardly be a trace left. Nor should anybody come and tell me that they have seen choruses written in

this style danced in Florence, in Rome and elsewhere, because dancing occurred only in the homophonic sections, which represent a minimal part of the choruses characterised by short and brief phrases in the style of the *canzonetta*, which was a dancing style which lacked artistry and was devoid of the variety of gestures required, in a way that was very different from the ancient and agreeable manner that was supported by a great variety of music, postures and choreographies, as well as by periods that were also long and connected to the discourse. Nor shall I omit the lame excuse adopted by composers to avoid writing in a style that is excessively simple and trivial, because they can satisfy their whims in other styles and genres if they want to show their ability in far-fetched works and of the kind that, as they say, requires study. As to the charge of simplicity, not always what is most artificial is also more beautiful, as one can gather from poetry, where nobody, unless one is completely mad, shall prefer the Porphirius Optatianus' verses with his *Acrostichides* to Virgil's *Eclogae*, that are so pure and simple. Nor shall it be possible to call those melodies trivial, if they are composed with good judgement, with melodic and rhythmic variety, [-<f.53r>-] and with the sort of expression of feelings and character that are required. I do not exclude, however, that some anticipation of a few words by the leader of the chorus would be useful to this effect, nor do I maintain that always all the choruses must be strictly homophonic. In fact, on the example of the ancients, it shall be possible to divide them into two teams (a practice that they called [dikhorian]) so that they would sing one at a time. Instead, I limit myself to provide general guidelines on the matter. On the basis of this general instruction, I maintain that the composers has ample room to provide variety. In fact, he shall be able to organise the ensemble at least in three ways. The first one can be called *plain chant*, the second one *faux bourdon* and the third one homorhythmic counterpoint. Each of these styles is then subdivided into different species. In fact, the *plain chant* can be written firstly to be sung in unison, secondly at the simple octave, thirdly at the octave divided harmonically and fourthly at the fifth. It is possible that the last two species would not be successful because of that protracted sequences of fifths, nevertheless it is certain that the composer could experiment with it as long as there were an instrumental accompaniment, especially of strong instruments that would supply all the consonances that could be appropriate. In fact, who would ever say, without having experimented with it in practice, that in registers of the organ the continuous sequence of several fifth and the false combination of notes that derive from it would mar the playing? I have no doubt that the second way would be successful, because that accompaniment of octaves in that fashion is not considered as contravening [-<f.53v>-] the rules; on the contrary, it is considered as a single voice, as it is common practice in the case of the thick strings of the lute that follow another thinner string at the octave. This would work even better if the instrumental accompaniment were extremely varied and were not contained within that octave. The second sort, which is the one of the *faux bourdon* (by which I mean composition for several voices built entirely of sixths or tenths apart from the cadences) is characterised by a degree of variety. In fact, if the voices are close together, like basses and altos, it can proceed in sixths, while if they are far apart, like basses and sopranos, it moves in tenths. Apart from these two ways, it can progress with a middle voice that divides the sixths into fourths and thirds, the tenths into fifths and sixths, or they can proceed by themselves and undivided. I must inform you that just as the tenths can be varied by changing alternatively the order of the fifth and of the sixth, the same can also be done in the sixth by placing the fourth in the low register when it is in conjunction with the major third, although contrapuntists are wary of such coupling, more because of a certain superstition handed down since the past century when it was felt that the fourth was a dissonance than because of a sufficient reason. The third itself can be reduced to two species at least, one of which shall be of a rigorous counterpoint of note against note and the other one of a less rigorous type where some diminutions are allowed in one of the parts, and this is the most viable and attractive of all. Now, if the expert composer applied his good judgement to his composing, considering where a style is more required than another one, [-<f.54r>-] he shall be able to let the audience hear such a great variety that nobody will miss the expedients of fugues or repetitions any longer, while at the same time everyone shall be completely satisfied. For instance, should one want to express unanimity of feeling to a greater extent, one will be able to employ *plain chant*, where one wants to express it to

a lesser extent, one will proceed by *faux bourdon*, while one shall adopt homorhythmic counterpoint where one aims primarily to arise pleasure in the audience. Moreover, should one ever want to have the spectators hear the pure chromatic, which is the one that does not exceed the notes of the fundamental tone, one shall be able to do this in one of the first two styles, since the third one is not very suited to this because it lacks the sufficient number of notes. [Moreover, I want to let you know that it is likely that the ears of the practical musicians of our day shall not be completely content with the first style of simple or plain ensemble unless these two conditions are satisfied, firstly, that it should be recited in sculpted taste enunciating the consonants very clearly to avoid than anything may go amiss, because one cannot gain from that sort of music the greatest sort of benefit; secondly, that the instrumental accompaniment should be created by the sort of instrument can supply the main element that is lacking in this sort of simple ensembles, which consists of imitations and variety of consonances. Therefore, string instruments should be employed, that have the same function, proportionally, in relatively small locations to the one that wind instruments, such as *pifferi*, flutes and organs had in the ancient theatres or in very large locations. [-<f.54v>-] However, I want to inform you that, in my opinion the, the most frequent of these three styles must be the homorhythmic counterpoint, followed by the plain chant, while the least common must have been the *faux bourdon*, which must be employed very sparingly and only for a few bars. This seems to me to be particularly suitable for those passage when one proceeds by step in the sort of chromatic that is called thickened, because it employs the specific diatonic and metabolic notes, as one can gather from the example below, in which the three top parts can be sung by the choir and the bass can be played by a violone without the harpsichord, because it does not appear that it would produce a good effect. Although its accompaniment will appear to some to be utterly necessary to cover, as they say, or, better, to sustain the fourths placed between tenor and alto, I disagree. In fact, I believe that the counterpoint would be able to proceed with those three parts alone. However, in order to strengthen the ensemble and to avoid that the voices be drowned by the instrument it shall be possible to arrange it in this way:

[Discourse on the rhythmic composition of Latin verses and on the melody of Greek tragic choruses, 54v, 1; text: *Quid caeca sors minaris! <.....> cruenta Menas, Instrumenti*].

Nevertheless, the mutations of the tones that embody the best of music take place mostly in the choruses (where they were used also by the ancients according to Dionysius of Alicarnassus) and it shall be possible to adapt them perfectly to the three instruments mentioned above. As to the instruments, none shall be more appropriate for a hall of medium size than our own pan-harmonic or tri-harmonic harpsichord, especially if accompanied by the pan-harmonic violone. However, do let us leave this to the judgement of experience that eventually will let us know how useful these instruments are and even necessary for the stage and our current theatres. I say this because the theatres of antiquity would require louder instruments (especially winds) that could be varied and perfected as we have done in the case of the aforesaid ones. Should it happen that this sort of music and of choruses does not fulfil completely the expectations of the audience, this should not appear strange and dissuade one from attempting greater enterprises, because it is easy to discover the reasons behind it. I leave aside the envy that major developments usually produce etcetera. I also overlook our necessity to introduce choruses within the very small spaces of our stages rather than in open [-<f.55r>-] and ample spaces, as it occurred in antiquity with great satisfaction of the eyes, and of the ears in particular, that enjoy so much such compositions sung loudly and accompanied by many loud instruments, namely, by *pifferi* and others such as the flutes of the choir, of which I gave a brief description) but heard from a distance. I leave aside the dances and the very artful gesturing practised similarly by the members of the ancient chorus, who were very skilled in these matters and other specific details of which we are aware and which, although they could be put into practice at least in part, nevertheless they would require the greatest study, effort and expense. However, what worries me the most is that, since the time is so short and inexperienced young men are employed, who are not very familiar with Latin and with that sort of voices, the action shall lack

both the vivacity, the suavity and the unity of ensemble that derives from choice and sonorous voices, and it is possible that the instrument shall not be heard very clearly, Besides, an accompaniment more artificial than a simple *basso continuo* shall be needed. For these reason, there will be perhaps some who shall call such melodies *friars' music*, and similar names.

However, these empty tales shall not deprive Vostra Signoria of the praise that deservedly you shall receive from those who are sincere, learned and of good judgement, for having dared to attempt such a beautiful and noble enterprise, but equally difficult and with such little help, and for having broken the ice and cleared the way to [-<f.55v>-] others. Vostra Signoria deserves this praise all the more from those who are wise, as it is harder it to restore what is ancient and to build on the old instead of starting afresh, although the opposite is believed to be true and this is not evident at first sight. The reason for this is very clear, as to restore to practice that has been lost for a long time presupposes an opposite and already accredited tradition that has to be contrasted without the presumption, that militates against what has been abandoned, as if it had been abandoned for something better. Moreover, it appears that a certain negative fate always opposes those who strive to restore the traditions of antiquity, since very often they happen to be rather unlucky as a rule, as many, many times I have experienced in my life.