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Title: New musical introduction by Giovanni Battista Doni, in which the author re-creates the musical scale, the prolation, the intabulation of the notes and the practice of music according to the example of the ancients

Title: Nuouo Introduttorio di Musica Di Giouanni Battista Doni Nel quale si riforma la Scala Musicale, [[l'Intauolatura e l'Intonatione]] La Prolatione et Intauolatura delle Note, Gl'esercizij della Musica con l'esempio de gl'Antichi

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[<f.1r>-] New musical introduction

by Giovanni Battista Doni,

in which the author re-creates the musical scale,

the prolation and intabulation of the notes,

the practice of singing and the other main

foundations of music according

to the example of the ancients

[<f.2r>-] [211 add. m. sec.]

[[To the Discerning and Virtuous Reader]]

To the Reader:

Discerning and Virtuous Reader, do not regard my enterprise too daring, if I expect to reform and correct the fundamental principles of musical practice that have been established now for more than six hundred years since the time of Guido of Arezzo, the inventor of the six syllables Vt, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La and of other features of this faculty. In fact, if we suppose, as it is absolutely true, that he lived in a very harsh century when all the sciences and most noble professions, among whom music, had been died out completely and were buried under the ruins of time, it is not surprising that, since he was in the dark, as we say, as to the method and practice adopted in those ancient and most florid times of the Greeks and the Romans, he was able to make very useful and fundamental discoveries as to the practice of singing simply through the light of his noble intellect, but he was not entirely successful. I believe that you realised from the rest of my works that I have been able to make many very important discoveries in this discipline through my reading of the ancient Greek writers whose work for the most part has yet to be printed, not because others more learned and resourceful than I am did not notice them, but, perhaps, because I read them with a little more [<f.1v>-] attention and diligence, thanks to the fact that I reached a better understanding of them than others who believed that everything improves with time or for other reasons. I had already come across in Rome a volume of various Greek music theory works that, among other singular writings, contains some fragments of anonymous authors marked with the number , and I was very glad to find some of the rhythmic or temporal signs used by the ancients, as well as the syllables themselves that they used in their singing practice, which correspond to our Vt, Re, Mi, etcetera, both of which were deemed to be unknown to the ancients. After I considered and observed carefully how appropriately they fit the tetrachords that make up every musical harmony and how not only all the ordinary melodies but also all the progressions of the different genera and tones are expressed by the much better and with greater succinctness and clarity than with our own ones invented by Guido (which is something that I had thought about earlier) I resolved then to abbreviate these ones following the model of the those of the ancients, conscious of what benefit contemporary music would derive, both in theory and in practice, as one shall be able to know easily from this essay. What also [<f.2r>-] prompts me to reform the universal system called nowadays the gamme or musical scale is the fact that I have recognise it as much less perfect than the ancient one, albeit more ample and wide-ranging, and less conducive to the understanding of musical practice and theory. Also, as it happens that one thing follows another, having experienced in practice how much our current notation can be improved, although it is in my opinion more attractive and comfortable than the ancient one, I have worked on this aspect as well and I have reduced it to greater perfection. Finally, having noted how defective and imperfect (and, consequently, boring and long-winded) is the

method used to teach children how to intone the notes (which they call *solfizare*) as well as the other singing exercises, I have strived to reduce these also to greater succinctness, clarity and perfection. Therefore, if Guido boasted that one could learn music much more quickly with his method than it used to be the case, equally, we shall venture to say that from now on [-<f.2v>-] children will be able to master the rudiments of music, master much better the art of composing and achieve the true understanding of this noble discipline in much less time (which is something so precious and dear) and surely at least twice as quickly. I know that there will be some who will deride this effort of mine, who shall judge it useless because they consider the ordinary and common practice easy and expedite with no need for so many innovations and discourses. I would like to beg these persons that before they make such statements they should consider with what great effort and difficulty they began to learn in their childhood about the prolation and the intonation of the notes through the many mutations when one goes below the *Vt* in descending or above the *La* in ascending, or when one changes clef from the natural to the flat one or when one encounters accidentals or in other similar cases. Such difficulties are so many and so varied that one can find very few singers nowadays who can read through all the clefs, and I have met gentlemen [-<f.3r>-] otherwise very bright and subtle intelligence who applied themselves in their younger years to the study of music with great fervour, but encountered so many difficulties and long-windedness that they abandoned their studies considering them too difficult and desperate an enterprise. I do not mention some others who, partly poisoned by evil envy, partly blinded by their own interest, would not want someone else to achieve with ease what would require them great effort and application, or that someone should learn within a short time the practice from which they earn so much, because, since such people are more guilty in their will than in their intellect, they must be left to their error and considered totally incurable. It is sufficient to me if the first group do not rush to condemn this enterprise before they have some experience of it and before they have considered sincerely if what I propose in this new method is true, namely, that all the difficulties of reading, uttering and recognising musical notes are avoided with a considerable saving of time, so that, [-<f.3v>-] on this basis, music theory becomes easier and clearer. I am not convinced, however, knowing the situations of our times and the character of this century, that this doctrine of mine shall be embraced easily and accepted universally, especially since a learning method so ancient and widespread across European music schools has to be eradicated first. I am not convinced of it, I do not believe it nor am I so much in my own inventions. However, on the one hand I am consoled, when I cast my mind across the other noble professions, that, after they were recognised, no discovery of such apparent usefulness, despite having been opposed and attacked by so many, has been lost, while, on the other hand, the intention, that at least I had, to benefit future generations with the little talent that God gave me, consoles me greatly. Therefore, I shall approach this enterprise confiding in His celestial help. I shall divide this brief treatise into four short parts, following the order that is more natural and appropriate to the present subject matter. In the first one I shall deal with the common system or musical scale; in the second one of the propaedeutic syllables *Re*, *Mi*, *Fa*, *Sol*; in the third one of the tablature and new disposition of the lines that represent the strings and sustain the musical voices and notes; and, finally, in the last one of the first singing exercises. I shall deal with all of this with the greatest possible clarity and brevity, [vowing to explain many details and to explain them more specifically in the Latin work that is to be published very soon. in marg.]

[-<f.4r>-] First part, on the notes and intervals of the musical scale; on the tetrachords; on the conjunction and disjunction; on the mobile and stable notes.

Chapter one.

The musical scale, so-called because it ascends from the low to the high register gradually, is an orderly disposition of singable notes with their specific signs and individual names. It is called *gamut* by modern theorists with an alternative name, and deriving the name of its whole from its beginning, namely, from the first degree or note that Guido added to it underneath, when he wanted that it should start from this third letter of the Greek alphabet, while earlier, according to Latin

writers, it had started from the A, either to signify that music acknowledged its Greek origin, or to distinguish it from it from the note corresponding to it at the octave higher which was marked with the Latin G. This scale was called greatest system by the ancients and [-<f.4v>-] it contained all the notes, intervals and consonances used in music and in singing practice, since this word system meant comprehensive group or constitution, although, absolutely speaking the number of the notes of the instruments used in music is unfathomable and indeterminate, and, even more generally speaking, even outside music. However, do let us see what is note and interval, since the musical system or scale is composed of them. The singable note called by the Greeks *phthongos* is a sound suited to form a song or a melody that is still for some time in its tension, both in the instruments and in the human voice. Such are the notes Vt, Re, Mi etcetera, uttered in a way that they hold, raise or lower the tone, and this is the sound of a string that has been struck or of a flute. This definition excludes certain imperceptible and hollow sounds that create more noise than resonance, as [-<f.5r>-] a small piece of wood, and also those that do not hold still and vary their tension in rising and falling, as in the case of the bells, although these sounds are not totally extraneous and unsuited to music, as one can see in the musical boxes where the sound is produced as music by various small bells. However, even in this case one considers mainly the first sound that they produce when they are struck rather than the resonance that follows after the percussion has ended and which follows as an added sound, which in the instruments is muffled to avoid it blurring the consonances. This is done, for instance, by the fingers of the players in the case of the harp and by the small pieces of cloth that are placed on the jacks in the harpsichords. Now, the difference between a note and another one, which consists in how much higher or lower one is than another one, is called interval, which means distance or span. In fact, if one asks what is the distance between Vt and Re, on answers that the distance is a tone, while the distance between Mi and Fa is a semitone. Therefore, the words tone and semitone (and the other ones of that sort that shall be explained later) are terms invented by the ancients to express the intervals or musical distances. Apart from the greatest and general system musicians acknowledge also other smaller and particular systems, the smallest of whom is called [-<f.5v>-] trichord and comprises three notes, for instance, Vt, Re, Mi or <Mi>, Fa, Sol. The tetrachord or quadrichord contains four notes, such as Mi, Fa, Sol, La, the pentachord five, for instance Re, Mi, <Fa,> Sol, La, the hexachord six, namely, Vt, <Re,> Mi, Fa, Sol, La, and so on the larger ones. Beginners must be aware that if one adds together any number of notes and Intervals accidentally, the number of intervals is always one shorter than the number of notes. In fact, it is true that in the trichord there are three notes, but only two intervals; in the tetrachord there are four notes and three intervals, and so on in the others. Even those who are less intelligent can understand this with the example of a hand, whose five fingers represent the five notes of the pentachord and the spaces in between the four intervals.

[-<f.6r>-] [Doni, Nuouo Introduttorio, 6r; text: Frigio, Lidio, <Tastatura di sopra>, Ipolidio, Dorio, sotto, Re, Vt, Fa, Mi]

The semibreves indicate the principal and cadential notes of each tone. The mutations are successful when one moves to the neighbouring tones, for instance, from the Hypolydian with the flat sign to the Hypolydian with the Hypolydian with the [sqb] sign; from the latter to the Dorian with the flat sign; from the Dorian with the flat sign to the Dorian with the [sqb] sign; from the latter to the Phrygian with the flat sign, from the Phrygian with the flat sign to the Phrygian with the [sqb] sign; from the latter to the Lydian with the flat sign and from this one to the Lydian with the [sqb] sign. Thus, thee two extreme tones are the Hypolydian with the flat sign, which is softest, most languid and saddest of all and the Lydian with the [sqb] sign, which is the most lively and cheerful of all. Therefore, one shall be able to practise in two keyboards two principal tones and two accidental ones, which, if one counts those with the flat sign as a separate mode, as our contemporaries do, will add up to eight.

[-<f.6v>-] Principal advantages of the instrument with two keyboards and two distinct tones

One can play on it that make mutations of real tones, which turn out successful and pleasant,

as well as any sort of composition with or without words.

One shall be able to play chromatic and enharmonic compositions better than in any other instrument.

One shall be able to tune and intabulate better the composition which contain many accidentals (which, for this reason, prove difficult to play) with the help of this instrument.

Ordinary compositions will be able to be sung and accompanied in a convenient tone. In fact, for instance, one shall be able to perform the ones that are melancholic and serious in character on the Dorian keyboard, and the cheerful and lively ones on the Phrygian keyboard.

One shall be able to practise the perfect tuning with the greatest ease without having to make the fifths smaller and without altering the other consonances, as one does from the octave onwards.

One shall be able to produce the sound of two instruments in one, so that a keyboard resembles the sound of the lute or common harpsichord and the other one the harp, also adapting such differences to the property and function of each of the two tones.

[<f.7r>-] However, should one consider it best to join the Dorian and the Iastian instead of the Phrygian on two separate keyboards, either because one prefers the difference and distance of a semitone that lays between these two harmonies to the distance of one tone that lays between the two other ones, or to obtain a greater variety of notes, since, if one assigns the species [sqb] [sqb] [sqb] to the Iastian, the Iastian has no other note in common with the Dorian (in relation only to the diatonic progression with the [sqb] sign) and also the one of C sol fa ut, when one ascribes to it the same species as to the tone E e, one shall be able to lay out the instrument as in the following illustration, adding to it, if one wants, in the lower part the Hypolydian keyboard and system, as in the illustration of the tri-harmonic harpsichord, which we considered. Note, however, that one ascribes the species of E la mi to the Iastian in the following illustration because it is the one that has most in common with the Dorian, so that the mutations from one to the other do not appear very strange and far-fetched. Consequently, the Aeolian species that shall be formed in the upper keys of said [<7>-] Iastian with the four dieses # C, # D, <# F, # G,> as the case of the Phrygian with the Dorian, will have to be the one of the D la, sol, re rather than the one of the A la mi <re,> which should be the one that it should have according to the strict application of the rule as well as the one that is closest to the Phrygian because it has two notes in common out of seven. Now, in this sort of arrangement the order of the dieses and of the flats will be the opposite to the one in the previous one, because, when one stretches the fingers from the lower keyboard to the upper one, one shall reach the latter ones rather than the former ones. Thus, the dieses shall be placed lower and closer to the hand than the flats and the sequence of the tone shall not be continuous, since the Phrygian, as to the height of the keys, will be located between the Dorian and the Iastian. However, this is not very important. Similarly, at the front of the keys we have marked the unisons corresponding to the notes of other tones, availing ourselves of the variety of characters that we have placed in the *Addition to the compendium*, but improved in the case of some letters. We have left out the enharmonic notes, leaving it up to the individual judgement to add them to any ensuing harmony or to both of the [<f.8r>-] general and diatonic in another tone, although we remained unsure as to how we should call certain notes that could not be considered chromatic in truth. It remains clear, however, that said notes are not employed as chromatic nowadays (since that genus requires the use of two adjacent semitones, which is seen very seldom in contemporary compositions) but as borrowed, so to speak, from other tones. This is so true, that, even if we did not accept the ancient tones, Dorian, Phrygian etcetera (although they could not be ordered more admirably and they were laid out by those who established this noble discipline) nevertheless, the same occurs in our modern tones. In fact, for instance, one will find that the F fa ut of the tuning of Florence [[a semitone higher than the one of Rome]] is the E la mi in the tuning of Rome. The use of these tones is so necessary, that few cadences can be created without employing them in the penultimate notes, and every composition that is very artificial and extraordinary adopts them in many notes, to such an extent that even modern composers [[had a smattering of the ancient tones]] have employed some mixture of the ancient tones, but randomly, by chance, and with little melodic variation compared to what it is possible to achieve on this instrument by employing whole and separate systems and

harmonies and with greater ease of tuning the notes which are laid out and marked naturally rather than with accidental signs as modern practical composers do. This instrument, therefore, contains two main systems, [-<f.8v>-] one above, which corresponds to the choral tone of Rome, which is accommodated conveniently to the Phrygian harmony from D to d, and one below, which is a semitone lower than the choral tone of Rome and corresponds to the Dorian mode or harmony between E and e, with the connection and correspondence that they must have between them. Thus, it occurs that, just as the system that lays above is a semitone higher than the lower one, similarly, the particular notes are two tones, or a major third, higher than their corresponding ones below, so that the first and lowest note of the Dorian system, which is E la mi, turns out to be the C sol fa ut of the Phrygian. Consequently, the entire instrument has the same lowest note as the common harpsichord and organ. Apart from these two tones that have continuous notes and a separate system, one can also practise two other tones with great ease, namely, the Lydian on the Phrygian keyboard and the Hypolydian on the Dorian one (which are sufficient to produce as great a variety as one might want) aside from their plagal tones above and below, namely, the Mixolydian, Hypophrygian and Hypodorian which can be easily found themselves. One can also practise the other less well known, such as the Iastian or Ionian and the Aeolian with their plagal ones above and below, which are the most recondite and secret. Moreover, the instrument is made with such mastery that one more perfect has never been seen to this day, since, not only it appears that nothing could be added to it, but also nothing could be removed, as all the tones are contained within it.