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[-<1>-] Confidential Letter

By a member of the Accademia Filarmonica,

And of the Academy of Arcadia,

a discourse

About a Book of Duets, Trios, e Madrigals

For several voices

Printed in Venice by Antonio Bortoli

The year

1705 [-3-] Dearest Friend

Two are the reasons (as I gather from your very courteous Letter) why you decided to send me the Book of Duets, Trios, and Madrigals for several voices: The first, so that I may amuse myself at the harpsichord with it, the other, to tell you sincerely my opinion on it. Moreover I see that, as you desire me to speak freely, you have crossed out the name of the Author from the aforementioned book.

Truly you have chosen a very appropriate time of the year, so that I may fulfil your wishes: because I needed nothing else, but the tranquillity of the countryside to have time to satisfy them. Be sure, therefore, that on what you ask me I will say honestly what I feel, so much so that you hold me to this by saying, that you are inclined to become very knowledgeable in good Music; and, before trusting the Author of this book (to whose School as to one of the best in Venice you are invited to subscribe), you want my opinion, and my approval. I have received also the Messa da Capella of the Sixth Tone for four Voices by the same Author, which, you tell me, is the best and most learned of his works, asking me specifically, to examine separately its style from the one of the other work: which I would have done anyway, regardless of Your suggestion.

Therefore, I will take as my amusement this autumn to reflect appropriately on both [-4-] works, wanting to benefit, not only you, but any lover of good music who would read this letter of mine. Moreover, I hope to present arguments so clear, that the Author himself, not only will agree with my approval, but also, as a result of my reprehension (when were it necessary), will be convinced, if not persuaded of his error. I say convinced if not persuaded, because you know very well that to convince,

one has special consideration for the Intellect; but to persuade it is necessary to command the will of the person one is talking to; and since the will is a distinct power from the intellect, it can be completely averse per se to the admission of the truth: but it cannot be so uncooperative, that the Intellect would conceive anything but the Truth that convinces it.

But many things (speaking firstly of the Book) which I could leave out, either because time did not allow, or because they did not belong completely to the subject matter, which I have to deal therein, will be considered by me in my current spare time; it is very true that you will easily understand that they all deserve some consideration, because they are like many lines, that in a straight manner or in a roundabout way converge to a single point, because they all tend to the proposed end. Just as a good Doctor examines not only the illness as it presents itself in order to cure it well, but the circumstances, even the slightest, which have contributed to it as a result, and that allow it to continue. These are mostly those same Humours, or we can call them (according to the philosophers) those four elements, that by agreeing in their discord maintain the Human being, who is made up by them, in good health; but once they be mixed and altered among themselves, they cause very serious Illness, and very often (if intervention is not prompt) death. Therefore, [-5-] I have still to talk to you about all those circumstances, which, if they are not each one by itself significantly wrong, or constitute all that is wrong, and which I have to show you as such, they are nevertheless of such importance that in their absence the aforementioned wrong would not exist. And in truth consonances, dissonances, chromatic passages, word-painting, modulations and so on are elements, which, in their rightful place constitute perfection in Music. If however they are submitted to an excessive and disproportionate alteration, they produce very poor effects, and very often, having become intolerable devices at the outset, they completely destroy the very desirable goal of a good and true harmony.

You urge me, above all, to do two things: firstly, to explain clearly, and without rhetoric; secondly, to avoid abstract speculations, as your only desire is to become an excellent practical musician. As to the first one, I will endeavour to please you, as in such a subject rhetoric is not congenial. As to the second one, allow me to say that you want to achieve a great goal without appropriate means, because good practical musicianship, and, as far as we can call it, perfect, cannot be achieved without a reasonable and certain foundation called theory, nor can be understood, I would say, in order to account for what one does in practical composition. And since each and every artist will perhaps achieve excellence in his art, as far as his practical experience will allow, rather than the theoretical observations which he neglected, thus, not being able to account with certainty of his artistic process, he will always lay himself open to considerable errors.

And in order that from the start you understand how useful it would be for You to comprehend, [-6-] and for me to demonstrate a few times what I will say with measurements, and numbers to hand, I will quote at least what Plato advises in this respect, talking in general about every art and discipline. [Plato, Philebus book 10. in marg.] "Therefore, if one were to separate out from all the arts the ability to count, weigh and measure (of which Theory consists) a trivial remnant, so to speak, would be left of each of those arts. Trivial indeed. The rest would only be achieved through a certain degree of imagination, the use of the senses, and conjecture (and here is

Practice). Mostly, these are called arts, which reach all their power thanks to application and hard work. And this in general is said about every science and art. Now listen to what he says about music in particular. "Is music not full of these? Firstly, it is not the measure that blends harmoniously the sounds, but careful conjecture" (here comes practice always lacking) "and the whole ability of playing an instrument is based on guessing the vibration of a particular sound. Therefore, it is imbued in great obscurity and little certainty (and here come its most negative effects, which themselves can produce more or less harmful consequences) [Idem De lege liber 34: dialogus 17:1 in marg.] "In fact independently of anyone's opinion, or approval, what is equal is equal, and what is commensurable is commensurable, but it is so for no other reason than truth itself. So, when somebody says that music has to be rated by the pleasure it generates, he must be ignored, nor this type of Music has to be sought after, if indeed it is cultivated anywhere, but the one that through imitation approaches what is good. Therefore, those who pursue the best music and words must try to achieve not the type that gives pleasure, but the one which is connected to what is good." Now you can see how, like any art and science, music must have a superior guide (not a corrupted ear) to reassure it and enable it to proceed at its best among her always numerous ambiguities, which today in particular [-7-] are almost infinite in number. The writers of antiquity who were expert in it have classed it unanimously as subordinate to arithmetic and midway between mathematics and physics with sound reason: because, having the numbers in common with mathematics, and measurable quantities, that is bodies, or we could say lines of sounds, in common with geometry, it clearly appears to be subordinate to the above mentioned mathematical sciences. Others have wanted to describe music not only as mid-way between mathematics and physics, but subordinate to the other, not because of the harmonic numbers of different kinds which it derives from arithmetic, because sound, from which every melody is derived, is a natural phenomenon, and geometry, which measures it, applies to it all its various considerations. But as in nature, no perfection is found in potentiality, but only in actuality, similarly good Music cannot be heard in its perfection through numbers and without sounds, that is in potentiality, nor with sounds devoid of numbers, that is without rational proportions: and this would be an act lacking in perfection, and, therefore, virtually unacceptable.

But regarding these universal principles you should read Plato's *Timaeus* quoted above, Aristotle's *Book on the Soul* and so on, Athanasius Kircher's *Musurgia*, which is clearer than many others of his works, Mersenne, Gregorius Faber, and our Gioseffo Zarlino from Chioggia (whose doctrine I will follow in this essay more than that of others, because he is very highly regarded by our theorists and composers) in the first, e second part of his *Institutioni Armoniche*, beside many other excellent writers of [-8-] this discipline.

I wanted to tell you all this before approaching the subject matter, because, if I disapprove of something in this work, you might remain convinced of it yourself thanks to intellectual speculation, and in order to avoid that you might be swayed by the naivety of one of our contemporaries, who, considering only what catches their physical eyes and ears, are blindly convinced to be infallible in this art [which, without intellectual speculation to guide it, offers nothing with more certainty add. supra lin.] than the risk to make many mistakes. As for the rest, I will endeavour as much as I can to make you a good Composer and to refrain from saying anything pertaining theory (if indeed I shall have to) that might not be grasped and understood

by you, or by anybody else. I presume that you will not be completely unaware of some principles of music, such as what are consonances, dissonances, intervals, accidents, species, false relations and so on, since, albeit said principles might appear dry and devoid of any attraction if considered by themselves without their practical aim, nevertheless we must be sure that from our level of familiarity with them originates the basis of our depth of understanding of what is to be said in this matter. Moreover I inform you that, if, in order to make you more trusting in what I say, you will hear me quote great and well regarded writers in this field, you will have to resign yourself to their authority at least in the matter they are quoted about, both for your and my sake.

Now, you must know that, since I must speak according to the rules of practical music, as I have learnt them from the greatest composers who were both theorists and practical musicians, practical composition is classed in two types. The first one puts into practice well conceived ideas; which means that it realises in sound the consonances created in abstract with excellent proportion; and this happens, or rather, used to happen in ancient plainchant where sometimes a consonance endowed with harmonic proportion and confronted with another one lower or higher produced a faultless melody or sound. [-9-] The second one employs, as the first one does, good consonances, but shortens them or varies them using melodic figures, contrasting smaller and longer note values, according to the time signature, or the type of bar adopted. Such second practice employs major and minor keys, sets words with meaningful turns of melody, and manages strict and looser imitations and so on. All this happens normally in those compositions called 'in the new style' or measured, and this praxis can be called, or rather, is called style or good taste: therefore, we can say with some reason that the first one is, so to speak, a material practice, and subordinate, because it only realises the intellectual operation, while the second one is noble and speculative, because it searches for the best effect and its own expression and natural composition. So, it happens often that a Composition is well developed according to the first practice and its abstract rules (which do not regulate style or good taste), but it causes the listener no pleasure at all because it is lacking in second practice, which means it defective in knowledge and application of a style suitable to its function.

But such style or good taste is an innate gift, rather than something that can be acquired with study. It is true that it is useful to distinguish and follow good models, and we often see that some who are endowed only with style and good taste achieve often better results [-10-] in pleasing the listener, than those who compose only following intellectual rules. So, one has to have great regard of both practices, as it happens in other disciplines.

Moving on now to consider the first duet entitled Incostanza femminile for soprano, and bass, I will tell you that it is very natural and easy, but of scarce invention, lacking as it is in what brings majesty and solidity to a true duet, while the triple-time section moves in a very banal fashion. However, I believe that the Composer did so in order to mirror in turn to the banality of the words, which in truth are not of such weight that might inspire great effort in the composer. As to the common time that follows, it could be a little nobler and fresher in invention. As to the change of mood that then follows at the words Se mostra coi Sospir and following, I notice a very faulty setting

of the idea, which is repeated in every bar. And what makes it worse is its lack of fresh invention.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 10; text: Se mostra coi sospir che il cor trauaglia, Motiuo commune uizioso per la repplica] Moreover, I must m

ake this consideration, that the author has not understood and developed [-11-] this theme conveniently, especially in the bass, because, modulating to E b, and then to C minor, he has used the A natural, and this goes against the true practical harmonic plan, and creates a false relation of tritone with what follows.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 11,1; text: Qui al A andaua il B molle per le ragioni ut supra. Se mostra coi sospir il cor trauaglia]

You will easily understand from the example which here follows that the subject of the last Sextuplet is false (either it is false itself or its answer); hence I cannot find a name for such type of counterpoint, as it goes against standard good imitation, which, as the subject it imitates, requires the semitone to be in its rightful place. But observe here that subject and its answer are in two different tones.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 11,2; text: sol. fa. mi. Soni i sospiri suoi fumo di paglia, Falsa risposta]

[-12-] This answer seems to be based on the first tone, given the E natural, which has as neighbouring notes F and D. The semitone is in its first interval F E, unlike the subject which has the semitone in its second interval. In order to avoid any untidiness, one could have proceeded as follows.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 12,1; text: Sono i sospiri suoi fumo di paglia, Accomodato.]

Further on, in a counterpoint at the eighth the voices clash harshly with a tritone, a type of passage which I find condemned by all counterpoint schools, particularly in a good duet.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 12,2; text: I, <sospiri> suoi fumo di <paglia>, Tritono, Meno cattiuo]

The rest, based on the previous subject, does not displease me: but I warn you that there is an excessive use of thirds which, although appear also earlier on, in the last passage reach the number of thirty-six consecutively, a flourish so long that in this fashion has never been written by any learned composer in this genre. Firstly, because overlong flourishes are forbidden in the true style of the duet, because is not admissible to allow any type of licence and it becomes tedious. Still, I think that this passage would be more suited to two violins, than to a pair of voices.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 13; text: <paglia>, Passaggio Vizioso per tante Terze.]

Hence one can see that this duet is written only with an eye to effect that one note makes with another, that is following the first practice, which enacts abstract

speculation, but with no regard to the second practice, or the suitability of its overall style. In fact, if we examine this work note by note, we will easily accept it as a succession of intervals, but, if we consider it as a whole, we will find the aforementioned shortcomings, which render it, if not totally loathsome, at least not very pleasing.

Before moving on to consider the second duet for two soprano voices, yesterday I had the idea to look at the whole book to pass the time, and having noticed cursorily many things that go against the good rules, and many against good taste and propriety of style, I have thought it a good thing to send the ones that go against the rules (which include fugal passages, imitations, dissonances, modulations and so on) to the main schools of composition in Italy at the same time as I have to discuss them, so that the objections that occur to my mind and jar with to the true science of composition, [-14-] might be upheld or rejected by their opinion. I did it to this effect, so that you may remain totally convinced by the universal authority of the most esteemed composers in the world, quite apart from my weak and personal opinion. And this I have done also with regard to the *Messa da Capella*.

Now, talking about the first section of the second duet, neither I like it, nor it displeases me. I mean, I do not like it because it is very ordinary, and I do not dislike it because it rather follows the rules, albeit the contour of the melody could be less harsh in the beginning, having never seen myself (or very rarely at least) the augmented fifth used in that way between the upper parts with a leaping bass line, but rather more in the second way with the parts inverted.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 14,1; text: I, ch' io peno ch' io sospiro, ch' io sospiro, primo modo poco praticato saltando il Basso senza quinta.]

And the reason why the first way is little adopted is because in relation to the bass the parts are not well set-out, as the sixth is under the third, unlike in the second example, where the third is under and the sixth above, as it is necessary to produce good harmony.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 14,2; text: occhi tiranni ch' io peno ch' io sospiro, secondo modo più praticato col Basso di grado.]

I observe then that, where it says *sospirar e penar* the seventh of the first Soprano above E sharp of the basso resolves very badly, since it rises to E natural against any rule, when instead it should descend to C. This fault nevertheless can be avoided by switching the parts, as the C is in the second. But such licences must not be taken without great necessity. Apart from the previous fault, it is improper of the bass to move from an enharmonic note to a diatonic one, that is [-15-] from the third to the first genre without touching the second one chromatic. But I will talk about this elsewhere more extensively.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 15,1; text: I, sospirare penar, Cattiva risoluzione. Armonia illegittima.]

Immediately after this passage, the part-writing is not legitimate in three parts including the bass, and worse without it, but it should be set instead in four parts. This way the fourth part above A # of the bass would sound F # and the augmented fifth would be accompanied by major third and major sixth, as here below.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 15,2; text: ottimo a quattro.]

In four parts the A # in the bass is excellent, as it prepares well the resolution with sharpened and augmented intervals. But in three parts it would have had to be done differently since, if, as it is, the passage is an error, nevertheless this is not the best way that one could write it, and, to be of good service to you, I have to show you how to improve even what is good, censuring even what is passable when something could have been done in the best way possible.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 15,3; text: Buono a chi piace, Migliore perche il Mouimento è sensibile.]

The same happens shortly after, where you will see the above mentioned fault consisting of wrongly resolving a dissonance, but made worse than the first one, because there the sixth is not next to the seventh, so in that instance the switching of the parts is tolerable, but here beneath the sixth follows the seventh an octave higher, [-16-] which is inadmissible, nor such a messy swapping of parts can be in any way justified.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 16,1; text: I, La risoluzione della settima del secondo Canto nella sesta sopracuta è pessima.]

The reason why I prefer the passage that will be corrected [[rather]] [underneath corr. supra lin.] in a similar way to the other is because, having to change key, as you see, the accidental that heralds this change must be in a part where it might be more evident than in the bass, which has no other role but of joined or real foundation and accompaniment.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 16,2; text: Buono come sopra à chi piace, Migliore per le ragioni ut supra]

I will mark some other comments in the book, and you will understand them better, when you receive it, as, since I am dictating this letter to an amateur, I don't want to abuse of his kindness having him write every small detail. Otherwise, as to the following triple time, where the imitation starts, I do not dislike it, but had the melody been shorter, or more varied from the beginning of the words, I would have rather liked it, as it becomes too repetitive by the end.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 16,3; text: Ch' io peno, ch' io sospiro e nol credete ch' io peno, Principio.]

[-17-] [Marcello, Confidential Letter, 17,1; text: Non mi sento di uoler morir pèr uoi, Fine medesimo.]

Now I want refer, as I said before, to something that I have marked in the book and that relates to the improved conclusion of this duet, advising you to confer with someone more expert than you are whenever you find a passage that I improved and you do not comprehend. In this way, you will remain convinced of it.

Moving on to the third one called *Querela amorosa* for soprano and alto, as far as I can see the book is all constructed in the same way, namely, of musical ideas that are all ordinary and very often repeated much more than good composers, whom one should imitate in this kind of composition, used to do. But the author of this book has never seen the madrigals of the Prince of Venosa, of Monteverde, the collections by Vecchi, Stradella, Carissimi, Bernabei, Pier Simon Agostini, the older Ziani, Stefani and so on. But, shame on him, if he has seen them and has not adopted the first ones as a foundation, and of the rest of them as a model of style and good taste. I maintain, therefore, that I am continuously finding very trivial passages, and particularly a certain section, which can be seen repeated almost in every duet, which consists in the movement the bass a fourth upwards while the top parts descend a fifth downwards tying the changing Seventh, as I show here below. This is a commonly used passage which, has become noxious because of its frequency in this book.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 17,2; text: Come ladri del mio core]

[-18-] Therefore, I advise you to use it hardly ever, since, besides having been practised so often in the past, it is found so often in this collection, that it has to be classed as a very sterile device.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 18,1; text: 7, à lagrimar, Modo uizioso per la repubblica.]

To sum up, all this helps to stretch out a piece easily, but (as I said in the beginning) it is not enough for anyone who wants to write well to avoid breaking the fundamental rules at any given opportunity, when the boundaries of the style are neglected. I also reply that in the work of a Composer I disapprove even of what is good in comparison with what is better, as you can see here beneath.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 18,2; text: I, passabile, Migliore]

The second bar of this passage is weak. Consider the last two crotchets E and C in the soprano and G, E in the alto. The corrected version is excellent, because it is not convenient for the higher parts to anticipate the modulation before the movement of the bass. I invite you to take a look at the book which I am sending you back, in which I have marked other observations regarding the section that follows up to where the triple time starts, where you can easily find the passage referred to above.

And here there is another fault against the second practice, the one concerning good taste, because there is another very considerable untidiness (which I call a fault), which anyone of sound judgement will condemn. Here there are several octaves which resolve in unison without any reason, a type of imitation which is the worst one can write, because it renders the counterpoint very lacking [-19-] in sonority, which, especially in triple time, must highlight the downbeat and skate over notes that proceed in step-wise motion. It would sound terrible without the bass, which however in this type of passage must never be a primary character.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 19; text: I, 7, Ottaue Vnisoni. Vizioso ut supra.]

In this case, I consider the piece to be for solo voice, since the second upper part is redundant, as it does not provide an improvement to the way the piece sounds. I maintain that what one can imitate in this book is very scarce, while what good there is you would find it, if you look for it, in even less gifted composers. As far as I can see, also in *Funerale della Speranza*, the fourth duet for contralto and tenor, our Contrapuntist relishes answering the subject always by imitation, with an answer in another key. To be honest, I do not approve of imitation, especially irregular. It does not matter that in the development of the composition this false imitation is such because of another musical idea. I am convinced instead with all good composers that answers must be real in the first instance. The countersubject must be subordinate to the answer, and only in its latter part add some free touch to the double counterpoint, which, because it is an accompanying part, must never overpower the principal part, namely, the answer to the subject. Have a look here beneath at his untidy part-writing and consider whether my correction clears it all up.

[-20-] [Marcello, Confidential Letter, 20,1; text: Falsa per il secondo Contrapunto. Speranze mie quanto infelici siete, Basso improprio. Accomodato ogni disordine.] And here again is the passage which I illustrated in the previous duet, albeit with a different time signature.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 20,2; text: 7, 6, Vizioso per la repubblica.]

The next duet is *Già nel barbaro sen*. I like it up to the end of the common time, and it is the best one that I have seen so-far. My only remark is that here and there the Bass could be stronger in establishing and reinforcing the key, because, falling as it does all the time by fifth or sixth, the key is rendered uncertain. Apart from the fact that descending with all the parts for too long a stretch spoils the writing.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 20,3; text: Sue <na.>, Passabile, Migliore. 5, 6, 9, 8]

[-21-] And here is the triple time, where I see the subject in the tenor being very badly answered in the alto. Although one can understand this imitation, it is nevertheless worse than the first one in this duet, because in that one the semitone is, at least implicitly, in its right place and can be called an arithmetic imitation, if not an harmonic one, according to the proportional division of the octave. However, in this case, as you will see, there is merely an imitation of the note values. Moreover, it is illegitimate because the semitone, on which alone depends the success of the imitation, is totally in the wrong place. Such imitations, therefore, are similar to the work of a painter who, wanting to paint an accurate portrait, creates a head with all its parts but without an idea or resemblance to the face that he wants to make a likeness of, and expects to have made it accurate only because the parts in his painting, nose, eyes, mouth resemble their real correspondent. You can see very well, that in order for a copy to resemble its original, beyond all its parts, it must have in itself the air or individuality of what it imitates. Therefore, a good imitation does not simply consist in the note values (quavers, or whatever they are) but also in the melodic contour of the subject. Nor can the countersubject rescue a false imitation, because firstly the subject must be well answered either as in a real Fugue or by imitation, and only then it must find a second musical idea to accompany the answer in the key.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 21,1; text: 3/8, do sol fa mi re. Imitazione di figure non sèrue a nulla, Cambiate in contrasogetto. Imitazione, ò risposta giusta.]

On top of this, you can see that in this book there are no regular imitations which correspond correctly to the first idea fa, mi. So why introduce a theme, just to disregard it completely later on? It would have been less wrong to start the theme with the interval of a tone sol fa, and then carry on in imitation. But I can see that the composer writes considering only one note against another one, rather than being enlightened by sound principles of composition.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 21,2; text: I, Proposta, fa, mi, re, do, Risposta, sol, sol fa.]

[-22-] [Marcello, Confidential Letter, 22,1; text: sol - fa. la - sol.]

Further along, I see that the composer has mixed untidily one key with another. I mark it in the book, so you can consider it at ease. I will tell you instead that I have never seen part-writing as boring as I see at this words *e poi piangete*: I counted eight consecutive repeats of these words in the alto, and eight in the tenor. This is very inconvenient, as we will see again towards the end of this duet. I add that in the passage below, according to the rules of strict counterpoint, there are two consecutive fifths, which are particularly exposed, as the C in the tenor is immediately higher than the B in the alto and next to it. Nor does the fact that these are secular compositions justify the fault. In truth, I would not mind too much if the rest of the composition were beyond reproach, but in a decrepit composition, such as this one, comparable to the body of an invalid, every fault stands out.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 22,2; text: 5, 3, Accomodato]

Just as I begin to analyse the Fifth duet for two sopranos, I see an imitation in the bass which makes mincemeat of the good rule of resolving dissonances.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 22,3; text: Amor, Impropria risoluzione particolarmente: à due. Accomodato e con l' imitazione.]

I see very clearly that the composer has deliberately chosen to move the parts in this way, but it is not the sort of licence that one should take, because imitation, which is an inferior goal, must not destroy the main aim of the composer, which is the good resolution of dissonance. You, not being yet an expert in these matters, might answer me that these are minutiae, which should be overlooked. But I answer that these little faults, together with many, many others of a similar nature which can be found in this book, contribute to its poor quality. All this, going against the rules of style and good taste, if not the fundamental ones of musical science, renders the composition worthy of pity, rather than emulation. This reminds me of what I read in your letter towards the end. [Lotti pupil of Legrenzi m. alt. in marg.] You say that the Author of this collection is a product of the school of Giovanni Legrenzi. I do not know if you tell me this so that I might hold the student in the same esteem [-23-] as I hold his teacher with good reason. [Antonio Biffi was then Maestro di Cappella di San Marco and was a student of Legrenzi's as was Lotti m. alt. in marg.] You add also that our Maestro di Capella, a fellow student of the composer at the above mentioned school, approves of

this collection in all its parts, and justifies every reproach that might be hurled against it. Therefore, it seems that you want to make me enthuse about it, which, if it were true, it would reflect badly on yourself - having you dispensed with my opinion - since such thoughts denote someone who knows little or nothing in this discipline.

[Not all good teachers have the good luck to turn out good students m. alt. in marg.] I will tell you that, as far as I am concerned, not all good teachers have the luck to produce students who are all good: in fact it is expected too much of the students in order to enhance the reputation of the teachers with their successes. I think that a student absolving another of his faults is tantamount to a condemnation, and, to tell you the truth, I have not found in my analysis anything that one might consider as especially hailing from Legrenzi's school. On the contrary, none of the faults that I disapproved of can be found in the manuscript and printed works of the aforesaid composer, as far as I am familiar with them. Therefore, I have to say with good reason that, either the teacher has fooled the student, or the student has not understood the teacher well at all. By the way I repeat that, if the Maestro di Capella approves of this work, either he has to disown the good school, or justify his approval, or accept to be considered in the same way as the composer of it, so that both of them might be judged by the same measure. But on this matter I remember that a trustworthy person – I will tell you his name when I see you in person – and a friend of mine and good follower of Legrenzi, told me on more than one occasion that the teacher used to complain that he had two pupils who would not have completed their training before he was dead, [saying by Legrenzi m. alt. in marg.] but I do not know who these two are.

Now, let's move to the aforementioned fifth duet for two sopranos. I say that the bass from the beginning up to a certain point would sound better if it had another bass line as foundation, because in some resolutions, and especially at the end of the second bar, it moves very harshly, as you can see from my markings in the book. Shortly after that, we come to the usual passage already mentioned, the one overused and trivial. Then we find a D sharp in the first soprano against an A in the second, and this A is never resolved, but rises to an even more dissonant C, [-24-] which is also without its rightful resolution. It should descend to its neighbouring B, dwelling on it for a while to allow time for the resolution to be understood.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 24,1; text: I, 7, 5, 6, aspra, Falsa: più falsa irresoluta. Vizioso pèr la repplica, Accomodato.]

I assure you categorically that I have never seen such inept use of dissonances, which have not been resolved as one must, in any good composer, least of all in Legrenzi, hailed as teacher of this one. Other suspensions between the parts follow, but the bass is not according to the rules, particularly in this style, as here below.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 24,2; text: I, Basso illegitimo, E qui pure, Legitimo.]

Legrenzi never used the first type of bass, but he has used the second. In the first one, because of the utter confusion between one genre and the other (diatonic and chromatic) one forgets which one is the dissonance that has to be resolved, since the dissonance between the upper parts is consonant with the bass, and what is consonant with the bass, being dissonant with the upper parts, resolves onto another dissonance

with the bass, so that the parts move from dissonance to dissonance without reason. Besides, there is no place for an F sharp (dissonant) after a B (dissonant), and a D sharp (dissonant) [-25-] after a G sharp (also dissonant) in the chosen key, if not as dissonant accidentals after a natural note which, being in the middle, would resolve the previous dissonant one because of the diminished fifth that is on top of it. I am telling you about these subtleties because I would not want you to pick up such bad habits declaring that you are following somebody else's example, because your stile would be very faulty and no expert will praise you. Therefore, in order that you may better know the truth about the above mentioned gratuitous confuse mixture of genres, it will not be uncalled for to make you aware of their different quality, order and proportion. So, I will tell you that three were in the past, and still are, the genres thanks to which every melody, or counterpoint has its shape and its distinct character: the diatonic, the chromatic, et the enharmonic. According to Ptolemy, the first to be discovered was the syntonic diatonic, leaving aside its distinction in soft diatonic and so on. It was used in ancient times by itself alone, as it was made up of such steps, or intervals, which, repeated in its tetrachords, produced a certain particular harmony, of which the ancients were content, as they used it to create compositions in no more than one part, quite differently from modern composers, who use so many and different consonances, that they seem never to be happy with what they find in the above mentioned three genres, so they add to them random and irregular ones. Now, the diatonic genre has each tetrachord (four of these are natural, and one is accidental, as in the demonstration following herewith you will see) made up of two tones, a minor and a major, and of a major semitone. This tetrachord, repeated or used with reasonable judgement, can produce a simple and natural composition. But this does not happen in the other two genres, chromatic and enharmonic, since their tetrachords (albeit containing the same number of intervals) produce a different quality of sound. The chromatic is made up of two major semitones and a minor third, and the Enharmonic contains two dieses and a major third. Hence it is clear [-26-] that, if by themselves they do not constitute a complete harmonic system, nevertheless they can accompany the diatonic to embellish it according to good modern practice, and make it varied, in comparison with its simple coherence. And truly we cannot build a well organised and varied composition in the chromatic genre, and even less so can we do in the enharmonic, without using at least sometimes the major and minor tone, which belong to the diatonic. In such cases the genre will be called mixed. Now that you have well understood all this, you will be convinced that the diatonic genre in its simple form must maintain the quality of its intervals in order to be distinguished, and particularly the character of the major semitone, which cannot be discerned as such without the fa after the mi, as you will see further on. Hence in the passage outlined, where a B moves to an F sharp, you can see how the two genres Diatonic and Chromatic remain unreasonably mixed together because, as B mi is a diatonic note, (and so must be the melody written in that genre) it must rise directly to C, to reinforce its genre, rather than fall on to the F sharp, which is a chromatic note, and, therefore, of a completely different genre. The second passage, where the G sharp in the bass moves to D sharp without any diatonic note in between, is even worse, because these said notes do not belong to any of the genres described above. But even if they were considered to belong to any of those genres, it would be convenient that the G sharp moved immediately to A (as sharpened notes tend to rise), rather than to move downwards to the D sharp, against any law both nature and harmony. And I think that these irregular movements are reprehensible especially in the Bass, as it is the foundation of every genre and composition, which in particular consists in the

appropriate use of the semitone [Gioseffo Zarlino part 3. chapter 19. in marg.], any composition lacking of which would be harsh and unbearable to the ear.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 26; text: Tetrachordo hypaton, Tetrachordo Meson, Tetrachordo Diezeugmenon, Tetrachordo hypèrèbolon, Tetrachordo Synemenon, Ordinè o genere Diatonico]

[-27-] [Marcello, Confidential Letter, 27,1; text: Tetrachordo hypaton, Tetrachordo Meson, Tetrachordo diezeugmenon, Tetrachordo hyperbolon, Tetrachordo Synèmenon, Chromatico, Enarmonico, X]

Note, that the signs under the notes A. E. B. E. A. of the last genre are intended to be added to these notes precisely as you can observe them in the demonstration of the three aforementioned genres, which Gioseffo Zarlino provides in the third part of this *Instituzioni harmoniche*, chapter 72. And this sign X is called enharmonic diesis, not because in practice it is not of the same value as the chromatic diesis in making the note rise a minor Semitone, but because of the different circumstances in which it is found, since the chromatic diesis is found between tones, which it divides, while the enharmonic is found between semitones. Its function is in fact to divide the major semitones, as from the above examples it is easy to know.

Lastly, you will be better convinced thanks to these demonstrations, which in the diatonic genre one must proceed from mi to fa, in order to avoid damaging its nature by removing the inalterable semitone in each of its tetrachords, since going from B mi to F sharp would mean passing improperly to the chromatic genre. The second passage entails moving from G sharp to D sharp, but since these notes do not belong to any of the aforementioned three genres, it is rendered worse, as these notes have been introduced by the practice found in our harpsichords, or other artificially tuned instruments. So much more then it would have been necessary to have a middle note of one of the genres between G and D, to avoid their inappropriate proximity.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 27,2; text: Diatonico confuso impropriamente col Cromatico, Corda fuori de' sopra detti trè Generi e confuse, Il primo ridotto al uero Genère diatonico, Il secondo accomodato con una Chorda del Diatonico ò Chromatico]

Do not be fooled in thinking that the messy example of genres shown above could be considered as acciaccatura, but we will talk about this device at the appropriate time. So, as far I can see, these duets are written with little care for style, or good taste in such matters, and they, such as the next one, are more suited to....., which is a pity, since one can write so elegantly for two voices.

[-28-] [Marcello, Confidential Letter, 28,1; text: Ripieno]

Everything that follows is imitation, in most cases a false one, as you will see. Such untidiness is remedied, as far as I can see, with the countersubject, as if it were necessary to answer always in an untidy fashion in order to build a countersubject. But one must find a countersubject suited to the answer, and it must be of such character as not to cloud the real answer.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 28,2; text: Mi re sol, Contrasogetto fa, la]

Consider now how many repetitions of the two words men gelosia there are up to the end of this section. These repetitions alone by themselves have no meaning, so you must learn to avoid them, if you want to please with your music anyone who understands counterpoint. In this book in fact there is no consideration to the good disposition of the words or of the notes. On the contrary, - I apologise if I speak too bluntly - it seems to me that such writing is the work of a student rather than that of an expert composer. I would not have believed that these were your compositions, if you had told me, had the author not intended to create a caricature of good music by writing in such a way. Finally, I like the section in 6/8 which follows, since the modulations from a key to the other are made with good judgement, the suspensions make excellent effect and the theme is a pure one. Therefore, I am inclined to believe what anyone would be satisfied with it. I do not approve of the entry of the second voice in the common time that follows, since, apart from coming in on a fourth and carrying on with it (an interval which I do not want to discuss if it is a consonance or not according to the ancients), although there are all the necessary notes to answer correctly, the out-of-key cadence in the first voice counters any good effect that the second voice produces by entering in the original key, since the two parts are so far apart tonally.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 29,1; text: I, Risposta alla proposta del primo Canto, Basso meno Cattiuo, perche almeno in battere ui è Terza e Sesta.]

The rest the proceeds so predictably that, heard the first bar, one knows how it has to be until the end. It is true that the theme is more varied than the usual passage that we were talking about, which would be more suited to an organ interlude by than in a duet. Hence, albeit now and then I approve of the individual consonances that there are in this book, given that they are so badly laid out, I consider this book not different from an irregularly shaped building constructed of wonderful materials.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 29,2; text: 7, Vizioso per la Repplica, E più sotto. E più sotto ancora]

[-30-] In such a way you will write very soon your counterpoints, but consider for an instant if it is proper to introduce ideas so frequently used and modelled on the themes that appear in the various collections by Arcangelo Corelli [Cornelli ante corr.] in a work printed to serve as an example of good writing to others. But Corelli availed himself of such ideas correctly, since they are more suited to string instruments than to the voice. Hence I conclude that nothing can be learned from this book, except to avoid its mistakes, which are many, and the improper use of good ideas, which permeates it. And if I wanted to tell you the truth, I would say that you are teasing me when you say that the composer was a pupil of Legrenzi's, as I am please to have myself learned more from Legrenzi's work, than the this composer from his vocal discipline. However, if the Maestro di Capella or anybody else approves of him, it is a sign of their bad judgement. I will add in this respect that in another dispute Francesco Petrarca was told by his friend in the third chapter of his Trionfi d'amore that we are all tarred with the same brush.

I have not thought to tell you until now that all the duets are full of passaggi. This came into my mind considering this one for two altos, where, as I can see, there is a lot of passage-work. Listen, it is not that I forbid this absolutely, but I tell you instead that the too frequent use of unconnected passaggi without words that require them is something very wrong, and is the symptom of a lack of ideas. Herewith you can see resolutions preempted by two unnecessary notes. This is not right, and it signifies lack of application. It seems to me the voices would have sounded better in the second way shown.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 30; text: I, Passabile, Migliore]

In any case, the composer writes with too much freedom, and, as much as I study Legrenzi's compositions, and those of many other, equally good composers, I cannot find a similar case of inept resolutions. Consider that passage on the words *il Bronzo accende*, and tell me what your thoughts are, not just as far as the ear is concerned, but also the eye. I could almost guess from the pedal note on which it proceeds, as well as from other pedals [-31-] in this work, who is the composer. But, as you would rather I did not know who he is, I willingly acquiesce in this uncertainty, so I may carry on expressing my opinion on uninfluenced by anybody else.

I like the triple time at the words *solo il cor di Mirtilia* because I notice in it some good suspensions used by the best composers. To sum up, I conclude that who wants to write well must follow the rules of the good composers of the past, namely, to create a good suspension and to resolve them even better.

I mark on the book some passages occurring in these two places, which seem to me unnecessarily harsh, especially in the bass which moves from an altered note to another without a natural one between them which would reinforce the key. And you can see from the second bass that this is true.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 31; text: I]

Firstly, the C sharp at the end of bar two of the first alto is redundant and wrong, as it creates a dissonance and moves on to another one, which is already in evidence, because of the ninth and tenth above the F in the bass, which is truly ruined by the previous C sharp, as it badly responds to the antecedent in the second alto. Moreover, in the corrected second bass which I notated, many other harsh clashes are avoided, since with the right bass one can more easily understand the movement of the parts, while a badly written bass disgusts the ear so much that it doesn't allow it to concentrate on what it should in order to appreciate the piece. Surely Legrenzi never resolved his suspensions with such a bass. To ascertain further the truth of this statement, take a look at his book of duets and trios entitled *Idee Armoniche et cetera*.

The next one is *poicche fiera crudel*. I like very much the suspensions at the words *non crede al lagrimar*, because the dissonances and the resolutions are well placed, although the composer approaches the G minor cadence with some harshness. [-32-] In the next passage, where said suspensions are repeated the note in the bass is wrong, as you can see. Apart from this, the A major chord must not be pre-empted by a C sharp in the bass on the beat, since it effective only off the beat, while the upper parts are tied. [Marcello, Confidential Letter, 32,1; text: I, 6, 5, Accomodato.]

Now observe the final section of the madrigal for two voices *Mio core, languisco* by Giovanni Legrenzi, and you will find a similar passage, or very similar to this one with the second bass corrected by me with regards to suspensions and tonal structure.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 32,2; text: *Simile del Legrenzi, prou i aspre pene*]

At the words *Fiamma et cetera* I have marked in the book the true notes of the bass, to strengthen the key, because a long descending progression with fifths and sixths never provides a strong sense of tonality. This has to be avoided, except in extreme situations, not to cause the listener a sense of uncertainty, as I have already noted in the *Funerale della speranza* at page , in the second excerpt..

I am lucky to have a holiday in my villa, and to have the time to consider these weaknesses, which, I realise more and more, are the same repeated, as in the seventh duet for two sopranos. Notice right at the beginning, how this passage is unique and never seen before, while the words *t' adoro* should not have been repeated, as all the strength of the emotion is contained in the two words *se non*.

[-33-] [Marcello, Confidential Letter, 33,1; text: *I, 7, poss' io morir se non t' adoro o Fili, Tritono*]

I do like the three bars that follow here beneath, where the words are *la mia costanza*, and I did find similar examples in Monteverde, Palestrina, Benevoli, Carissimi, Legrenzi and other good composers. This passage is excellent at expressing the feeling, and wise composers use it freely.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 33,2; text: *La mia costanza eterna e, Buono e praticato da Buoni.*]

I notice after this certain repetitions of words which are pointless and have no meaning. For instance, where it says *dimandalo alle tue care pupille*, the composer repeats *care pupille*, while it would have been more convenient to repeat the word *dimandalo*, which contains the strongest feeling. Hence, I deduce from this that the composer understands very little, if anything at all, about the power of the words. It is very difficult, therefore, or rather impossible, for a composition of his to succeed without untidiness. But this is a habit, as I said in the beginning, that goes against the rules of the good second practice, since music will not inspire any passion in our souls, as it used to do in antiquity, [statement as notable as it is true m. alt. in marg.] if the composer has not got a good grasp of the individual features of the emotions and of how they express themselves. However, this is not the place to teach you about how ancient composers used music to produce different emotions and how versed they were in other subjects et cetera. It might be possible that, [-34-] before I come to the end of this letter, I will find a suitable place for this excursus. Next, I notice a resolution that goes completely against the rules, non only because the parts switch between themselves, but because the tied dissonance is, at least implicitly, longer than the consonance to which it is tied. You will understand it easily yourself from the crotchet A of the second soprano which is tied on the next beat to an A, which forms a seventh with the bass. This seventh is understood to be lasting an entire half bar, because the resolution could only arrive on the upbeat, as you can see in the first soprano. You can see another fault here, apart from the dissonance being longer than

the consonance. This consists in the dissonance ascending against any rule and convenience, as the composer expects that its resolution, which reasonably should be the G immediately below, should be the high G in the first soprano, which is an octave removed from its legitimate resolution.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 34,1; text: I, 7, 6, Rissoluzione cambiata troppo tardi e troppo distante. Cattiua rissoluzionè pèr quantità, e qualità.]

But the cause of this fault can be found in this, that the idea which first appeared in crotchets is not properly reduced in half bars etcetera. Further on, the upper parts pre-empt the bass with a new harmony, while it still holds on to the previous one. This does not deserve approval, as one must consider, so to speak, the extreme parts when moving on to a new key.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 34,2; text: I, F. anticipato dalle parti, Accomodato le parti.]

[-35-] You can see how badly the parts introduce first the F, while the bass is stuck on E. The second version of the passage contains my correction of this fault. As for the triple time, which you do not see corrected, I like it, but towards the end of it, I have crossed out *ch' io per te mi consumi*, because its harshness is too extreme, as you will see. Further on, the composer repeats in the bass a very unreasonable accompaniment to the upper parts that move with suspensions. Nobody has ever practised it, and the composer's imagination, I believe, could have done without this, because creativity is laudable when it improves what is already good, rather than when it makes worse what is already bad.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 35; text: Cattiuo mai usato dal Legrenzi, Accomodato, et usato dal Legrenzi, et altri Buoni.]

Legrenzi never used it in this way, and the reason is because all three parts move from dissonance to dissonance. This case, as I already said, cannot be classed as the bass being used as in an *acciaccatura*, but this case exemplifies that one cannot go from an altered note not belonging to the key to another such one, as the character of the key comes out confused et cetera. So, Legrenzi has adopted, in a similar instance, the second form of the passage, which I have written down. The most extravagant passage that I can find in a manuscript madrigal of his is this one, which is good, as I will show later. The madrigal begins *Mio Core languisco*. However, it is true that Legrenzi prepares the dissonance more prudently in his printed collections, as you can see here below.

[-36-] [Marcello, Confidential Letter, 36; text: *proui aspre pene*, Buono usato dal Legrenzi etcetera, *dell' amor la crudeltà. Falsse prèparate dal Legrènzì Idee armoniche pagina 8 in fondo, E più innanzi, Deh perche crudelmente u' ascondete. Preparate ibidem pagina 10. Buono dèl Legrenzi. Cattiuo dell' Auttore.*]

Why did Legrenzi not practise this? Because he understood well that it is not proper to resolve a dissonance on another one in this way, and particularly by disjunct motion. So, he used this licence, but only in stepwise motion, as we have seen above in his madrigal, where he resolves the seventh of a species on to the seventh of

different one. This resolution is more legitimate because the second seventh is of a different harmonic quantity than the first one, so in a way it becomes a consonance, and this is the case of the *acciaccatura*, which we can use better in stepwise motion than by leap. So, here you have the above mentioned case with the same terms, and, albeit the details of individual movements are different, nevertheless general progress is the same. [-37-] This will suffice on the subject, as we won't need to repeat ourselves, adding only, as further proof of what I said, that you will notice better the faults if you switch the parts, because the bass will never fit properly above the two upper ones.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 37,1; text: I, Del Legrenzi e buono, Idee armoniche, ibidem, Dell' Autore e cattiuo.]

The second way is so much worse because the F sharp in the bass carries a diminished fifth, which it must resolve, descending, on a consonant chord which has as its root the note G.

As to the *Capriccio*, the eighth duet for bass and alto, I cannot find anything about it that I have not already said about the previous ones, since it is in the same vein. I do not like much how the composer resolves the dissonance in the second voice at the words *già si nascose*, and also I see that the word *ricovrò* is repeated without reason in two or three places, which is a sign that the composers understands little of the feelings in this piece. The triple time that follows presents an idea to answer which the composer uses in turn an interval never used in a similar situation. In fact, he moves from the seventh A G to an even worse dissonance, which I do not want to name properly for now, but which is F sharp over B fa.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 37,2; text: I, E pèr tormento mio]

[-38-] I do not know if I need to use Geometric demonstrations, which divide harmonically and arithmetically the octave in its exact intervals, in order for you to understand better the fault that I am about to demonstrate to you. But, although I have promised to avail myself of the rules of practical composition rather than of those of theory, nevertheless I will be obliged to refer to theory in some measure. So, I will say this firstly.

Once the Diapason, or octave is divided harmonically or arithmetically, one finds that the Diapente, or perfect fifth, is made up exactly by three tones and a minor or major semitone, according to which note is used to begin the division of the octave in the seven resounding intervals. As a consequence of this, one cannot take from or add to the fifth any quantity without compromising the perfection which belongs to it as integral part of its mode, or tone, and to the octave which constitutes said mode. Such perfection has been pre-ordained by nature in potency in the form of fixed quantities of sound, but (I avail myself here of words more intelligible to the practical musician) was discovered and reduced to practice by music theorists with the calculations of measurements and numbers according to Pythagoras, Boethius and so on. The perfection of these two intervals occurs in every division of the Diapason, except the one based on the note B., which cannot be divided harmonically because of the note F, a fifth of smaller quantity, and hence defective of a minor semitone; the note F., which cannot be divided arithmetically, because the note B mi is a fourth augmented

by a minor semitone. But we will talk about this further on. Since the intervals which can be divided in different ways, harmonically, and arithmetically, are A. C. D. G. E. and two that can be divided only arithmetically, B., or harmonically F., we say that the twelve modes, or tones are created of them according to all the twelve divisions of different species. These modes, or tones are then subdivided in six even, and six odd, that is six authentic and six plagal modes or tones. For instance, if we take the first species of the Diapente, which is between D. and A. as we add the first species of the Diatessaron on top of it, or fourth, which is between A. and D., we obtain, from such addition what we call the first mode. This process is called harmonic division, because between B. and D. we find as median note A. which is also perfect fifth of the first species of the Diapente. Such harmonically divided modes, which are six together with the proportions of the first one, are [-39-] called even or authentic, while the other six, which are called plagal, because they are divided differently (that is arithmetically), are obtained in this way, but always using the same six notes. Namely, the result of adding the first species of the Diapason (between A. and A.) to the first species of the Diapente in its lower part is an Arithmetic division of the Diapason, since the octave between A. and A. is divided by D. which is the fourth median note dividing said Diapason. But the reasoning behind such divisions can be more deeply understood with the help of mathematical proportions and measurements, as one can see in the Dimostrazioni by Gioseffo Zarlino. Therefore, the other six modes, called odd, or plagals are derived from this arithmetic division, which is common to the six mentioned notes, and they differ from the authentic, or even, in as much as the division by which they are created is different

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 39,1; text: Diuisione armonica, Diapente, Diatessaron, Diapason, primo modo Authentico, ò pari. Diuisione Arithmetica, secondo modo impari ò placale.]

But, as we have said above, the second species of the Diapason, which lies between B. and b., and the sixth one, between F and f, cannot be divided in the two ways we have seen, but only in one. The species between B. and b. can only be divided arithmetically, while the one between F. and f. only harmonically, since the minor Diapente F is too small to divide harmonically the Diapason between B. and b., while to divide F. f arithmetically, the major fourth B. is too wide.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 39,2; text: Diuisione Armonica impropria, Diapente deficiens, Diateseron redundans Diapason. Diuisione Arithmetica impropria,

Diuisione Arithmetica propria. Diuisione Harmonica [Armonica ante corr.] propria]

As we have seen, then the ancient modes are, or were, twelve, albeit a thirteenth, based on the same division as the first, has been described and a fourteenth, based on the division of the second. However, the modes or tones according to modern and more frequent practice are only eight, and of a kind almost totally different from the twelve above mentioned, because practical musicians and composers, for easiness of use, employ them at their discretion with a b flat fixed in key signature. This accidental, whether in the key signature or not, determines the name for the most part of which one of the eight modes, or tones is being used. So, the tones are said to be transposed because of this accidental, but no tone, because of its nature, can be modified by any accidental. For instance, the fifth mode built [-40-] harmonically

between F. and F., when it is found, according to modern practice, with the b flat in the key signature, becomes sixth, albeit, if we adhere to the rules, it is the eleventh transposed and contained between C. and C., also called by modern composers call fifth. Accordingly, the second one becomes the seventh which is between G. and G. when, for instance, it has a minor third which has become natural because of the B. fa in the key signature, similarly to what happens in the first mode, which by its nature has a fa F. natural, and a minor third. Equally, the second plagal mode (formed by the first species of the Diapason from A. to A., as in the first mode from D. to D. when it has the fixed minor sixth) is called nowadays seventh, albeit, according to the organisation of the said twelve modes, it should be named second, being formed by the first species of the Diapason from A. to A., but transposed. The reason of this is that the mode on D. with a minor sixth corresponds, as far as its intervals, to the mode on A., which naturally has the note F. as its minor sixth. But, as I said, the organization and application of modes, and tones nowadays has reached such confusion, that only at the beginning or end of a piece one can distinguish their particular features. At the same time many composers avoid pursuing such matters and consider only two species of scale, that is major and minor, or we could say, with a major or minor third, although any person of good judgement can understand how unreasonable such a stand is, and how it undermines the foundations of well structured composition.

Now, I do not know what advantage you would have acquired from this digression of mine, but I am satisfied, as far as our present task is concerned, that you have understood the natural perfection of the fifth and octave. If these are altered, they become incapable to create any of the established modes, or tones, which depend, as I said, on the higher or lower position of the perfect fifth. To come back to the point, the composer used F sharp above B fa, which means he uses a fifth made up of four full tones, or a semitone more than it is needed, as you can see if you start measuring from B. fa up to al F. sharp. Moreover, not only he does this without preparing the dissonance, but straight after a seventh, which is dissonant by its nature, and must itself be resolved. Hence, he has gone against both first and second practice.

[-41-] [Marcello, Confidential Letter, 41; text: I, Quinta composta di quattro tuoni.]

Here you see how this fifth deviates from its natural composition, which is of three tones and a semitone. However, one might object to this that, the fifth and the octave are not of the same degree of perfection, so the fifth can suffer alteration. I make this distinction: I concede that the octave and the fifth are not equally perfect, but I reject that it is legitimate to alter the fifth by adding a semitone because of this. Firstly then I account for the different perfection of the two aforesaid consonances, and I say that the octave is more perfect than the fifth, since it is the case that what is nearest and conforms most to its origin, better preserves the nature of it; and in this respect, it is more perfect than others equally derived from it, but more distant and different. Such is precisely the octave, which is the nearest and more corresponding to its origin, which is the unison. The fifth, as it is further away from its origin, is less perfect than the octave, but it is equally perfect in quality, if not in quantity, like, for instance, two circles, one larger than the other, in the sense that the smaller one will be perfect, but in smaller quantity, although equally perfect in quality to the larger one. The reason is that, since the smaller circle is made up of the same proportions as the larger one, albeit of smaller quantity, and since it derives from said larger one, it is endowed with

the same degree of perfection. The fifth has this same relation of dependency with the octave, because its proportion is contained between 3 and 2, which form the nearest proportion to the form of the octave, or double, which is contained within 2 and 1. From this consideration it appears that the fifth cannot suffer any alteration without its basic quality being substantially altered. The same can be said of the fourth, which is less perfect than the fifth, because its proportion is more remote from the octave. If for instance we add to the fourth a major semitone, the tritone is created, which is a very harsh dissonance. So music theorists divided the consonances in perfect, and imperfect, in order to avoid any confusion, in the way I show below. Among the perfect consonances they put the unison, the fourth, the fifth, the octave and their compound intervals, while they named the rest imperfect, which are the third, sixth, octave and their compound intervals. They disregarded the second and the seventh which cannot be used by themselves and are dissonances, and [-42-] consequently more open to any alteration, be it major, or minor. We will explain further on how the said fourth and fifth can be augmented [by a semitone, and how they are called the one triton, and the other augmented fifth add. supra lin.]. We will also show the least offensive application of them. To sum up this digression, it is enough for you to retain that the different type of perfection that the fifth has compared to the octave cannot allow it to be altered absolutely, as its nature will be perverted, as we have seen in the example, taken from this composer's work, that I brought forward. [Marcello, Confidential Letter, 42,1; text: Consonanza pèrfètta, 1, 4, 5, 8, 11, 12, 15, 18, 19, 22, Consonanza Impèrfetta, 3, 6, 10, 13, 17, 20, Dissonanza, 2, 7, 9, 14, 16, 21]

As we have ascertained sufficiently such truth, we will move on now to the practice in order to be better understood, and we will say that this is one the first rules on the use of intervals established by composers of counterpoint, namely, that two major thirds, or two fifths, or two fourths cannot be stacked one on top of the other, because way every good harmonic proportion will be spoiled by doing this.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 42,2; text: 3, 5, 4, 3, Tutte Cattive.]

Now, in the above mentioned case seen in this book, the B fa, as part of the appropriate development of the composition, has certainly a D, major third, on top of itself, but the D in turn has an F sharp, which is also a major third from D. Here is the first mistake, which goes against the practical application of theory, of which it is a negative consequence. Moving on to the other error against the second practice, (the discipline which correctly enacts the well conceived ideas of the mind, and thus creates what we call style, or good taste) I say that the composers also have a common rule, namely, that, after a dissonance, one has to move on to a consonance without fail. And I notice here the fault, already mentioned, by which the composer moves from a dissonant seventh, by way of resolving it, to an even more dissonant interval, which is F sharp above B fa.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 42,3; text: I, Cattiva in peggiore.]

Hence we can see the other breach of the second practice, consisting in this illegitimate resolution, and so on. Now, I will review the many reasons that the composer could bring forward to me in order to save this passage from my censorship, and that of others.

First. The F sharp on top of the B. fa absolves the role of an augmented fifth. Second. This interval has been used on other occasions by good composers, and by Legrenzi himself. Third. Since the fifth diminished of a semitone can be given, so the fourth can be given augmented. [-43-] Fourth. If the augmented sixth and second is allowed in practice, so can the fifth of the same species. Fifth. Such a passage can be regarded as acciaccatura.

I reply.

As regards the first reason, I maintain that the augmented fifth can be admitted, but as an augmented fifth, not in the role of a perfect fifth, as it appears clearly from our case, where the said augmented fifth appears as an answer to the first musical idea, and similarly further on, as can be better seen in the book, where it is only apparently augmented, but it is rendered perfect in practice, and so on.

As regards the second reason, I say that all the good composers who used it, like Legrenzi, have used it coming from a good consonance, and have resolved it upwards, as befits every major alteration, or diesis, rather than downwards, as in our case, and so on.

To the third reason, I respond that the fifth diminished of a semitone appears in the division of every octave, so it can be used, being an interval that constitutes the octave. The diminished fifth, however, is not found, and never can be found, because what is added to it is taken away from the sixth, which, being an imperfect consonance, can be made major and minor, and so on. I add that the use of the minor fifth cannot be overlooked, because it is naturally created, and nature never produces anything without reason.

As to the fourth reason, I say that the second and the sixth can be given augmented, because, since one is totally dissonant, and the other is consonant, they are, therefore, subject to alteration. However, if they are augmented they will always have to rise, and never fall.

Finally, I reply to the fifth reason that, as far as the acciaccatura is concerned, this is not the case, because the acciaccatura is an ornamental sound effect, such as the appoggiature, which are devices of singing technique written out by modern composers, et cetera, and not a substantial part of counterpoint. This acciaccatura is employed especially in recitatives, cadenzas, movements from a key to another one et cetera, as is explained more amply in the book *Armonico Prattico al Cembalo*, chapter nine by Francesco Gasparini, my teacher. [Francesco Gasparini was the teacher of the anonymous author of this critique, who is Benedetto Marcello m. alt. in marg.] The famous late harpsichordist Bernardo Pasquini used to refer to these as acciaccatura, but also used to call them Mordenti; they did not give the listener a sense of stability, but they were useful to keep the ear in suspense until it was left satisfied by a following upward movement. [Bernardo Pàsquini was a famous harpsichordist m. alt. in marg.] He did not believe that they formed part of the Counterpoint and answered to its rules, as anyone of sound judgment can gather from his Sonatas as well as from Frescobaldi's works. [-44-] Therefore, it cannot be admitted that the acciaccatura, which is universally regarded as an accidental ornament, should be used as integral part of the counterpoint, and that one should learn from modern composers to write

imitatively using acciaccaturas. Now that we have understood when in rigorous discipline the augmented fifth is not admitted, let us see briefly how and in which circumstances many good composers (and Legrenzi himself) have used it, since I agree that many things which are against the rules, if they are used with discretion and without abusing of them can be, if not unobjectionable, at least tolerable. Be sure that in our case I do not condemn the diminished fifth per se, rather in the context of what it anticipates and follows it; and these are the forbidden intervals according to Gregorio Fabro and others.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 44; text: I, Ouverture, Diapason redundans, deficiens. Diapente redundans, E la ragione perche la Quinta Minore sia usabile l' abbiamo à sufficienza mostrato. Ecco il modo di metter in opra la Quinta superflua.]

[-45-] All of the above mentioned examples of augmented fifth and many others appear in the opera entitled Medea printed by Monsieur Charpentier. Monsieur Pourcel, English, and Monsieur Lambert and Lulij, French, have used it a lot in their printed compositions. However, you must establish if this is a different situation, since in the examples shown above the augmented fifth is used to approach the cadence in polyphonic piece, without the restrictions dictated by a fugue or by an imitation. This is a more peculiar than strict case, as one can see in many repetitions in different keys in the Aria Quel prix de mon amour et cetera by the above mentioned Charpentier

Observe now if the augmented fifth ever descends. Although the French are the less strict as far as the rules of counterpoint are concerned, [The French were less strict in applying the rules of counterpoint m. alt. in marg.] they cannot change however the nature of minor or major accidentals, whatever they are.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 45; text: I, ascende, Cambiata, Di Giouanni Rosenmiller, ò del Todesco, nò del fine dell' ultima sua sonata à 5; stampata.]

I believe that you are quite convinced of the different use of said augmented fifth by reading the examples on paper. This interval is found only once in the entire works of said Rosenmiller, but several times as a diminished fourth, because, as we said above discussing the second duet, it is more proper that there should be the major third immediately above the Bass, and on top of this third the minor sixth, than any other lay-out, but the sharpened note must rise, whatever the vertical order of the intervals. The reason is that this exposed major third, especially on top of a minor sixth which itself does not move on to a fifth, is too harsh on the ear. This can be seen in the above mentioned duet, in the first passage at the words ch' io peno. So in the first example Rosenmiller swaps the [-46-] minor sixth of the alto with the fifth in the second violin above the A. with major third, and in the second passage the minor sixth of the second violin with the fifth in the alto, as you we can see here.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 46,1; text: Del sudetto Rosenmiller Sonata prima stampata.]

Here above the augmented fifth is turned into a diminished fourth, a more common interval, because it is well grounded, and so on. But here below it is used as a straight augmented fifth by Palestina even for unaccompanied voices. Note how the G sharp

of the soprano above the C natural in the Tenor ascends, just as we have understood it being the case in all the other previous passages.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 46,2; text: I]

[Singular passage by Palestina m. alt. in marg.] Now I come to the acciaccature, and I say that they are of many types and occur especially in recitatives. For instance:

[Passi di Carlambrogio Lonati e di Bernardo Pasquini m. alt. in marg.]

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 46,3; text: I, Di Pier-Simone Agostini nella Cantata Inuocatè Deità, Sempre adorarmi, acciaccatura, Di Carlo Ambrogio Lonati. Cantata Presso un Globo. Che non sanno influir. Di Bernardo Pasquini. Cantata Fili che sempre, e non trouarla morte, Del mèdemo Pasquini Cantata Vn di soletto Eliso, Piangi mio Cor deh piangi.]

But this can be seen even better in a Toccata di Cembalo by Pasquini, which I treasure, as it was given to me as a gift. Here underneath is the passage. [acciaccature nowadays are called anticipazioni o prolungazioni m. alt. in marg.]

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 46,4; text: I, acciaccatura]

[-47-] I could add other useful examples, but, since the other ways to apply acciaccature are similar to these, I think that this will suffice. What is left to show you is how Legrenzi uses the augmented fifth. His way is very different from the way we have in hand, as you and anyone else will understand very easily. When I return to Venice, I pledge to show you an infinite number of examples by different composers, but, as I said earlier, not very different from the others. It must also be noted that they are preserved in manuscript, which means they are not exposed by those eminent authors to the public domain. Notice now how Legrenzi uses the augmented fifth. Firstly, it is prepared by a consonance. Secondly, it is not restricted by an imitation, strict or otherwise. Thirdly, the augmented fifth rises, as sharpened notes have to do, while the Bass descends step-wise to create the cadence. Fourthly, the passage is for solo voice, a style of writing where expressive singing is of paramount importance.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 47,1; text: 3, Se maggior tormento sia, Legrenzi Idee armoniche ibidem]

And this is the case in which two major fifths, one on top of the other, are tolerable, because a above F is a necessary note to enable the Bass to move to D, and, similarly, D above B flat in order for it to descend to G.

Go back now, and consider the counterpoint in the book we are dealing with, transport it in the appropriate key, and think if it has anything to do with the above shown examples, which are also the less bound by the rules. You will understand very easily which augmented fifth is worse, judging it by what comes before it and what follows it.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 47,2; text: I, Cattiua in peggiore, anco quì.] However if the composer had delayed the imitation by a bar, and used a different bass,

everything would have been resolved, as in this case from the beginning. [Marcello's correction m. alt. in marg.]

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 47,3; text: Esser tormento mio]

[-48-] Nor it is any use trying to justify the composer's fault by saying that the words E per tormento mio inspire such harshness, since Legrenzi was setting similarly harsh words in the above mentioned example, but he did not use the augmented fifth quite outside appropriate practice, as our composer did. Gioseffo Zarlino in chapter 24. of the third part of his *Instituzioni armoniche* talks about this in such manner. These, and all the other intervals shown above are extremely dissonant and must not be used in counterpoint because they would create discomfort to the ear. He means the diminished octave and diminished and augmented fifth, and also the fourth made up of three tones, which is the tritone. All these intervals are in fact dissonant because they cannot be expressed by the proportions of the harmonic numbers. And not only Zarlino condemns the use such dissonances in two parts with two notes, as it is in our case, but also with four notes in two parts, that is because of the relationship, or species of these dissonances, as we will see further on.

Marcello, Confidential Letter, 48]

Another reason comes also to my mind, which nevertheless I do not think the composer could put to me because of its implausible nature, which is that F sharp on top of B fa can be considered a minor sixth.

Therefore, I say that in the first instance it suffices to consider how the minor sixth which produces this effect is formed to conceive a feeling of disapproval and abhorrence. This is because the key of the piece, which is from C major to G major, cannot accept or produce a G flat, which would form the presumed minor sixth, because its use would create an improper confusion of two utterly different keys, since a G diminished by a semitone would destroy the character of the keys of C and G major. Equally, if one wanted to consider F sharp as a G flat to produce the minor sixth, how does the following D natural fit with all this? Hence derives the almost impossible union of minor sixth with major third, at least outside the practice of the good composers, as we have seen above. But the most incontrovertible proof that the note above B fa is not a minor sixth, but really an F sharp [-49-] is the downward leap of a third to D, a note what is strictly related to F sharp and never to G flat. Moreover, if said F sharp were to be considered as a minor sixth, it should descend to the fifth by step, which is F natural, as it typical of a minor interval, rather than moving by leap to D, as one can see. And if one were to object to me that the composer moves to F natural in the following bar, I reply that said descent does not derive from the presumed G flat, but it is a rising movement from the last E of the preceding bar. Furthermore, if the answer to an idea in C starts on G, how can the G be deprived of a minor semitone without a reason and outside the key? Also, how can a G flat correspond to a b in the subject? Certainly we can form a minor sixth only in abstract by simply considering the two black keys on our common harpsichords, that is B flat and G sharp, but this cannot happen when the piece is built in such a way that totally excludes the construction of such interval, according to the intervals that make it up. In fact, in order to comprehend a minor sixth composed of three tones and two

semitones, one must find them and dispose them according to the composition of the minor sixth, which is to say as follows.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 49; text: Sesta minore. Semituono]

But this does not occur in the passage by our composer, where said two semitones, for reasons of key and movement of the parts cannot be found between B flat and F sharp, as we have seen from the example of the fifth composed of four tones at page, et cetera. So, who insisted on using them on a personal whim, would spoil completely the character of the harmonic proportion. Moreover, it cannot be said that F sharp and G flat are the same note, albeit, as I said earlier, ordinarily on our harpsichords there is only one black key which is used for both notes. But of this we will talk elsewhere at greater length. As to the present case however, the F sharp cannot be taken as G flat neither in its appearance, nor in its substance, because of the terrible effect (both to the eye and the ear) that considering it improperly as such produces. Now, let us return to the above quoted Zarlino, and listen to what he adds further on, where not only he condemns such dissonances, but their species, or false relations. For these reasons you have to avoid not only the above mentioned F sharp on top of a B flat, but, as much as possible, the species, or false relations of the dissonances, as you can see here below.

[-50-] [Marcello, Confidential Letter, 50; text: I, Specie ò Relazioni di Dissonanze. Diapason superiore, Semidiapason, Semidiapente, Tritono]

"So, to make our compositions free from any fault and correct, we will strive to avoid such false relations, especially when writing in two parts, because they bother the refined ear rather a lot. Although some people think differently, nevertheless such intervals are not found among the proportions used in music, and they are not sung in any genre. In any case, they are very hard to sing and they produce a bad effect. Hence, I am extremely surprised with those who have not prevented such intervals from being sung in any part of their composition, nor can I myself imagine why they have done this. Also, I cannot fathom how could it be a lesser fault to hear it as a false relation between two parts (when that very fault which was heard in the progress of a part is heard between two), since it offends the ear just in the same way. It does not matter in fact if one is hit repeatedly by one person, or by many people just once at a time, when the injury caused is just as serious". Therefore, if Zarlino censures so severely the species, or false relations, consider what one should say about our passage, where the dissonances themselves, not the species or false relations, are joined together with such inconsiderate carelessness.

I can assure you that I am very surprised (just as anybody of good judgement will be) [The Maestro di Cappella of Saint Mark's in Venice who approved of Lotti's composition was Antonio Biffi, who was a pupil of Legrenzi together with Lotti m. alt. in marg.] as to the reasons why our Maestro di Capella approves of such things. It is true however, that said Maestro di Cappella has different standards in his manuscript duets, or madrigals, where, to tell the truth, nothing as deplorable as this can be observed; for instance in the duet that begins Ad un Cor, che uiue in Duolo, and in a madrigal for several voices which begins Adria, che sei del Mar Sposa, e Regina and in many others besides which I have in my library. In these compositions I can really recognise the good teachings of Giovanni Legrenzi, and I deem it

impossible that said Maestro di Cappella would have let such fault pass, if he had seen this collection before it appeared in print. Therefore, I believe that he did not disapprove of it more because of his friendship with the composer as a fellow pupil of Legrenzi, rather than as a composer expressing an opinion based on rigorous doctrine.

[-51-] What can I say? You could have sent this book to any second-rate teacher of counterpoint, and he would have given you just as good an opinion, or even better than the one I gave you, because it does not take great knowledge to notice certain faults, such as the ones I list herewith. Notice here the movement of the bass, which would be correct in a minor key to express the words *Èi pena* in the ninth duet for two sopranos. The proof that what I say is true can be seen clearly in its immediate repetition in the minor key.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 51,1; text: *I, e pena ei pena, Improprio pèr Tuono con terza minore: Proprio pèr Tuono con terza minore*]

Further on he wrongly sets words which have a final and decisive sense to music with a questioning tone.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 51,2; text: *Vso legitimo del primo. di che lasci d' amar. Modo interrogatiuo, che le parole non portano.*]

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 51,3; text: *di chè lasci d' amar. Accomodato, Cadenza finale, e propria per le parolè.*]

Therefore, both in the first and second example there is a fault against the second practice, because in the first one, the real nature of the melody and of the bass has not been well understood, and in the second one the strength of meaning of the words. Here follows an example of a fugal passage where either the subject, or the answer is wrong.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 51,4; text: *Falsa risposta, Troppo cara agl' amanti e la <Catena>*]

Alternatively, the subject should have been answered while maintaining the key, albeit transposed. (You will better understand this if you transpose the [-52-] subject a third lower in C).

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 52; text: *Prima proposta, Legitima Risposta. ò pèr seruirsi della Risposta bisognaua proponere diuersamente Proposta diuersa propria per la risposta.*]

It is irrelevant to say that the composer has answered in the tone of A to the subject in the tone of C, because the duet begins in the tone of A, and A and E are interwoven in the fabric of the duet. So the answer cannot be considered apart from the subject, because, if the key proposed in the subject is altered, the answer itself also has to be altered. But, if the composer had this pressing urge to maintain the key in the answer, he should have maintained it in the subject, as in the last example. Finally, the suspensions which follow between the parts in the quoted imitative passage, as they stand, they are the least practised by composers, not because they are faulty, but

because they do not produce all the good effect which they should, and usually do produce, as it takes a great understanding and practical ability to employ them well. I do not dislike the final section of the duet, because the two counterpoints are well characterised individually. It is true that they mostly rely on the bass, or accompaniment to be described as double counterpoint, and that this is the best passage, not that one could ever write, but that I have seen in this book,.

I will say about the tenth duet for soprano and alto entitled Lontananza insopportabile, that I find many suspensions, more or less effective, and many other passages which are used to express the sadness of the mood, but sometimes they are too harsh, since the words do not require it, as I have noted in the score. Also, I note that, contrary to the first rudiments given to composers, a note of shorter value is tied to a longer one where it says ò pur la pena [-53-] amara (in a way which is exactly the same or similar to what the composer has done many times in the first few duets), at the words e poi piangete, ò diuenti pietosa, et cetera. This means that in the alto a semiminim (A) is tied to a minim (A) without it being a justified necessity of strict counterpoint, et cetera.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 53,1; text: *Minore non deue legar la maggiore. Accomodato*]

It is true that in Palestrina and other composers of works for voices without instruments one can find shorter notes tied to longer ones [Palestrina tied notes of shorter value with notes of longer note value, but the shorter is never shorter than a bar or half a bar m. alt. in marg.], but the shorter will not last less than a whole, or half a bar. In this instance it is done because their length of a bar, or half a bar preserves a good temporal proportion in performance. This does not happen when the crotchets are tied, because they are rendered unbalanced, and their effect is unseemly. However, if the composer maintains that it is not a fault, I do not want to argue, but he cannot claim that it is commendable.

Therefore, I repeat that I am uncovering all these faults in the work of this composer (particularly because it has been printed), because the students, who do not distinguish completely what is good from what is bad, are easily impressed by the print, trust it implicitly and justify their own faults with it. After this there follows a triple time in the minor key where I would alter the bass, because the D flat against the A natural in the bass is one of those diminished fourths that are too dissonant, and is classed by Gioseffo Zarlino as an extremely harsh interval never to be used. The fourth, as it was said above, is not only less perfect than the octave and the fifth, but cannot be altered without disfiguring its core character.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 53,2; text: *Equiuoco nelli Accidenti. Accidenti à suo luogo.*]

It is enough to change the accidental [-54-] in the bass, namely, to swap the flat and the natural signs, and the harmony becomes more open and clearer, rendering more bearable the second dissonance of the F sharp, after the first one has been well completed and resolved

The same can be done further on, where the same passage is repeated; beyond this,, I do not dislike this triple time. The duet then ends with the section with which it started, so I have nothing to add but to refer you to what I said above about it.

The eleventh duet for two sopranos begins badly, and carries on in even worse fashion, since its development is short on good harmony, and the transitions from a key to the other are too abrupt. The first cadence of the two parts in D la sol re is very is brought about very improperly, and it is badly prepared.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 54,1; text: La seruitù del Dio d' amore.]

Moreover, the second part under the F natural could be more effective, as here below.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 54,2; text: del Dio d' amore]

Apart from this, we come up against the same hurdle of inappropriate repetition of words, as d' Amore, are not the words to be repeated, as you will understand clearly. After this there are some good suspensions, also employed elsewhere. I like them, because they are appropriate, but I would not have used the bass in that way, as it becomes either harsh, or weak by limiting it to a single interspersed idea. You will see it clearly noted in the book. It seems to me that I have improved it a great deal afterwards.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 54,3; text: Soffrir la seruitù del Dio d' amore.]

At the words soffrir la Seruitù in the first soprano, rising from C sharp to D, the second Soprano rises very inappropriately to B, while it should have descended to F sharp instead. Firstly, because the G, with a C sharp on top of itself which ascends, must fall, and secondly, in order to reinforce the key of D, to which [-55-] the sixth cannot be associated, but always the third, or the fifth must be connected. Notice how the movement of the second Soprano goes against the requirements of the composition, because it is true that B can be used under D to form a third, but, being after the G which has on top of itself a C sharp, if it does not fall, the tritone and the false relation are accentuated, which was so disapproved of by Gioseffo Zarlino. Moreover, if we consider the E in the bass, said note is entirely and inappropriately consumed by a fourth, as it ascends throughout. This would not happen if the G descended, because only the G would have been considered affected. For these reasons it would have been good to make the following adjustments.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 55; text: Accomodato, e le parti cantano meglio. Soffrir la seruitù del dio d' amore.]

The same occurs in the following repetition, where, as usual, the words d' Amore are repeated twice without any reason. I say nothing of the harshness which follows the words un interno dolore because I am fed up with considering the repetition of such raw passages blending one into the other, as they offend the ear markedly; one of these would have been enough for me, rather than three, as you can see in the book. There follows another passage, which is wrong, firstly for the sudden modulation from a key to another one, secondly for the difficulty in pitching the intervals, and finally for the messy way in which it is written. Following the numbers written in the

bass, one understands that the extraneous note in the voice is the one marked in the bass, which really is not the case, namely, that the A sharp above the A natural is a minor second from said A, that is a B flat. But this is false, as we shall see. So, A natural, a diatonic note, is burdened with an A sharp, a chromatic note, and inevitably it is greatly damaged, and produces an extremely harsh dissonance.

[-56-] [Marcello, Confidential Letter, 56,1; text: I, Asprissimo 2b, 3#, 5]

[This interval of augmented third is not permitted in music m. alt. in marg.]

But in order to make you understand the difference between these two notes A sharp and B flat, I will say that there are two types of tone in the simple diatonic genre, namely, major, and minor. The major tone is the one that follows ascending after the major semitone in every one of its tetrachords, as it also is the one we find between A and B and a and b.

The minor tone is the one that ascending follows the major tone. Now, the division of these tones is made allocating two semitones each one of them, but the first one of these is minor, and the other major, because they cannot be divided in equal parts. See Zarlino, part 3, chapter 29 of the *Institutioni Harmoniche*, and notice how experience supports this. So, when practical musicians have divided the minor semitone, they have found that it is composed of four quantities, while the major is made up of five. Therefore, the whole tone (be it major, or minor) can be divided in nine parts called commas, as far as they can be perceived by the ear, although Fabio Colonna in his *Sambucca Lincea* divides the whole tone in just five intervals, so that the division may be even more clearly audible. Now, understood the above division, which occurs between A and B (which are precisely the notes of the faulty passage above), that is a diatonic major tone, we state that, since A sharp occurs in ascending, such semitone will be made up of four commas, and five will be left from the A sharp to the B, as it is shown here below.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 56,2]

The same happens in descending because going from B to A, the first minor semitone, which is B flat, will contain four commas, and the second, which is major, from B flat to A will contain four commas.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 56,3; text: Semituono minore, Semituono maggiore]

Were this not so, the note B flat would be the same as A sharp, but we have seen that the distance between this A sharp and B consists of five intervals, or commas, and consequently A sharp is intrinsically different from B flat, whose distance from B is of only four commas. Therefore, this is the order: ascending from A to B, first of all one will find the A sharp, and then B flat, while descending from B to A, while descending from B to A, one necessarily finds B flat and then A sharp. However, the more fundamental reason behind this arrangement is that, since the closer anything is to its origin, the more it retains of its nature - given that A sharp retains more of the quality of A, whence it derives, than B flat, and B flat more of the character of B in descending more than A sharp - for this reason it is necessary that the division of intervals be made according to their proportions, as it has been stated.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 57,1; text: Semituono minore, Semituono maggiore]

Therefore, from what has been demonstrated you have understood that the notes A sharp and B flat are not one and the same, despite the fact that our common instruments (harpsichords, organs, or other ones with strings and keyboard) have a single black key between A and B, which performs the function of both the above mentioned accidentals [Bulyuuski Michele. *Tastatura quinque formis* –1711. This critical essay was then written by Marcello after 1711. m. alt. in marg.]. On this particular matter I refer you the pamphlet entitled *Tastatura quinque formis* printed in Durlack in the year 1711. and written by Michael Bulijuuskij, a famous mathematician. You can also find at table 23 of this book the demonstration of the three genres, and you will find the difference between the notes A sharp and B flat in the last tetrachord of the enharmonic genre marked using these sign x and b. In the above examples I have used the sign # rather than this one x, because it is the clearest and the most widely used.

Now, from what has been said and demonstrated you will understand that the figuring of the Bass is very wrong, because the written note and the one sung are not the same. This is true for my harpsichord and for many others which have split keys to accommodate both major and minor intervals (leaving aside the harpsichord with many keyboards, where the tone is divided in smaller parts than a semitone), where said figuring of the Bass generates great confusion.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 57,2; text: 2b, 3#, 5, 3b, 4#, 6]

In fact, to support the singer I have to play the A sharp, a minor semitone, but if I have to stand by the figuring of the Bass, which shows B flat, I have to use another key, namely, the minor second, or major semitone. Hence, by playing those two keys together I sound together two semitones, one major and one minor, which produce a really unbearable dissonance. Therefore, it would have been better to disregard the numbers and resign oneself to chance, because, at least on the harpsichords with split keys, one could have avoided such confusion. I add another thought about the figured accompaniment of the minor second. I do not understand why it is not accompanied by a fourth, which then becomes third, but by a C sharp, which makes this passage, and the composition, so much harsher.

However, if, according to the figuring, the B flat was intended to be changed into A sharp on the downbeat, as I notice from the F sharp in the bass with the figuring of the major third, there was no need to put a C sharp on top of the A sharp, as this is a consonance well suited to the A sharp. Therefore, from this accompaniment we infer that only the A sharp is available to the musician, and that the figuring of the Bass is wrong in every respect. So, we call this interval augmented octave. It is augmented not as regards to false relation or species, but in its essence, and is in fact universally condemned. Moreover the accidentals, which indicate the change in the character of a particular note, are wrongly added to the numbers which indicate the notes themselves. And since the player seeks them out before the note, it would have been convenient write them before the notes, rather than after. So, these are all signs of poor second practice.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 58; text: Sègnatura irrègolare corrispondente al Basso. 3#, Segnatura regolare corrispondentè al soprano.]

Let us now consider the extravagant way by which he arrives at said A sharp. Firstly, he changes suddenly genre, and key by using accidentals, because after building a diatonic cadence, as you can see, in a instant he moves to the chromatic genre via an Enharmonic note, which, belonging to the last genre, is less compatible with the first one. But, it will be impossible or extremely difficult for any expert singer to pitch the same Enharmonic note, not only for the sudden change of key, but also because it is written wrongly. Because of this last reason, the leap is forbidden and not used in practice, since it is made up of two tones and a minor semitone. Nor can it be said that, in order to overcome this obstacle, the musician has to imagine that that A sharp is in fact a B flat (something which, as we have seen, it is not), because an average singer cannot have his sudden instinct (which rather befits a composer) and, being stunned by this unprecedented passage, cannot help but being plunged into uncertainty. Therefore, I will say that, in order to avoid so many and varied malfunctions, in the first place it would have been better to avoid such a passage, because of its harshness in passing from a key, or genre to the other, but if one wanted to pursue this at all costs, it would have been less wrong to write it as it is shown here below, to avoid confusion as much as possible, and using, as you can see, the correct figuring written in the order that I recommended above.

[-59-] [Marcello, Confidential Letter, 59,1; text: b2, 4, b3, 6, #3, #5, Passo migliorato, e mènò confuso.]

In this way, there is nothing else to withstand but the harshness of the writing, which may be judged good, if someone likes it. Nevertheless, I certainly would not use it, even if the famous Alessandro Stradella, whose work I have studied in great depth, employed it in one of his recitatives [Marcello studied the works of Alessandro Stradella in great depth m. alt. in marg.], but it is also true, that he notated it in the very manner according to which I have corrected the same passage, in order to avoid adding any notational confusion over and above the harshness of the part-writing.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 59,2; text: 5, 6, 7, #3, 4, Alessandro Stradella.]

However, personally, in our case I would have composed the parts in this fashion, thinking it sufficient to express the words *insolita pena*, since the B flat is a note not usually occurring in the key of A, but paying great attention to the specific character of the genre, to avoid anything inappropriate and too harsh.

[Marcello, Confidential Letter, 59,3; text: un insolita pena, Sufficiente per esprimere la parola.]

But I wonder if the above quoted passage, which I have demonstrated to be wrong for so many reasons, might be considered by him and by his friends as a singular stroke of genius. If this were the case, here would be the proof of what I said to you in the beginning, namely, that the composer who knows little of theory will always be liable to make considerable mistakes. I gather that this composer is indeed simply a practical composer, and knows nothing, or little about theory, because he writes such things which a composer with an average grounding in theory “would never imagine to be

writing, because, since music is, according to Saint Augustin's definition, science of singing, or composing well, as this is its only aim, how could such a composition be classed among those that obey to and [-60-] aspire to this goal, since it is so full of this kind of mistakes, and it is so badly organised that one can barely suffer to read, let alone sing it? Therefore, the composer will strive to write the parts of his composition in such a way that they can be sung well and with ease, proceeding with attractive, suave and elegant movements, in order that the listeners may gain pleasure from such compositions, and may be not offended by any one of their parts." This says Gioseffo Zarlini in the third part of the *Institutioni Harmoniche*, chapter 45.

This essay has been left unfinished, and was not published in print, as a favour to the composer of the madrigals as requested by a caring intermediary person, hence this copy of it is also incomplete.